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DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL
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UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES

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DESCRIPTION

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Abstract <p>My thesis focuses on international alumni activities in Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. My aim was to find development ideas and recommendations for the international side of the alumni activities. I intended to offer realistic suggestions enough in order to make them work in practice too. I put also my effort on finding recommendations for Business Management programme, because I wanted to make sure that the international alumni activities get attention in degree programme level too.</p> <p>The overall purpose of my bachelor thesis was to find out how to develop international alumni activities in Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences and what kind of development actions would be suitable, when regarding the entire international alumni activity and activities in degree programme level. I was also putting my effort on finding out what kind of perception the present international students had regarding the international alumni activities and how to get students involved with the activities already during their studies, even though they are not yet alumni. The theoretical context of my thesis mainly discusses the alumni activities and the development of services. The context is concentrated on in different aspects of alumni activities, especially highlighting social media in its services, and overall the service development with a value co-creation approach.</p> <p>The research in my thesis was based on both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The data was collected with survey and interviews. The aim of the research was to identify areas for development and get development ideas for the entire international alumni activity and the international alumni activities of Business Management degree programme. The results revealed that many aspects of the international alumni activities can be improved by using new practices in communication and other areas of the activities. Important factors were to make the international alumni activities to be more part of everyday activities of the school. By creating new practices for alumni involvement work and engagement level will be significant way to inspire and activate the present international alumni. The students could be more part of the activities during their studies and work together with present alumni. All the results can be utilized in the development work of the international alumni activities from this day on or in the near future.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

An alumna/alumnus (plural alumni) is a graduate of a school, college, or university. (Härkönen 2003, 49). Alumni activities are organized for alumni of the universities. The purpose of this activity is to keep in touch with former students and create networks between the universities and working life, and of course link graduate students with each other. Alumni activities have long traditions in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, in Finland alumni activities have become more popular just during the last two decades. In Finland alumni activities are quite young and therefore it has a different role in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences, especially if compared to alumni activities in United States.

I got familiar with alumni activities of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter Mamk) when I was working there as an intern and doing my professional training. I got interested in the topic and I was also trying to find different kinds of development ideas for it as a part of my job. Therefore I had already background information about the alumni activities in Mamk before starting the thesis process. I also noticed that alumni activities, especially in English degree programmes weren't that organized. This gave me an idea to focus on the international alumni activities of Mamk and also use Business Management Degree Programme as an example case.

The aim of my thesis is to find development ideas and recommendations for international alumni activities (focusing also on Business Management programme) of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. I am going to carry this out by collecting empirical data from current students of Mamk, and by interviewing alumni contact persons in other universities of applied sciences. I hope to get fresh ideas from them, and create strong theoretical framework, from which to seek help with. Mamk has organized more activities for alumni in Finnish than in English. Therefore I would like to put my focus on the English side of alumni activities and develop the alumni activities for Business Management students along with other international students of course. My interest lies in Business Management programme, because I am Business Management student myself. I will investigate what kind of opinions and interests students have regarding international alumni activities. I would like to get information of their wishes concerning the activities, and what kind of value they are expecting to get out of alumni activities. Basically I want to find out what kind of perceptions student have

of alumni activities and what kind of development ideas they have. With interviews my aim is to get new practical ideas for Mamk to utilize and get a clear picture how to alumni activity is handled in other schools in order to find a ways how to develop international alumni activities in Mamk.

My research problem is the following:

- How to develop the international alumni activities and the international alumni activities of Business Management degree programme in Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences?

My researches questions are the following:

- How alumni activities are organized in the universities of applied sciences?
- What are the students' opinions, interests and wishes regarding international alumni activities?

In my thesis I will create a theoretical framework out of two different parts. Firstly I will tell about alumni activities; what they mean, what is the current situation and how communication is carried out with alumni. I am going to focus also on social media and how it is used for the benefit of alumni activities, and how social media appears in its operations. Finally I will put my focus on service development in order to collect some useful ideas how to develop services and also utilize these ideas in my development recommendations.

2 SERVICES FOR ALUMNI

My theoretical framework consists of the description and analysis of the current situation of alumni activities in Finland, which is not so familiar to students in Finland. This gave me a reason why my aim is to develop the international alumni activities in Mamk: Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences have recently understood the significance of graduated students and their networks for education. Abroad, as in the United States and in Great Britain universities have already long while co-operated with graduated students, alumni and with official societies of uni-

versities. (Härkönen 2003, 49.) I will also tell something about the history of alumni activities and concentrate on services, the ways of communications and relations of alumni activities.

2.1 Alumni Activities

According to Härkönen (2003, 49) the word alumni comes from Latin and it means “pupil” or “protégé”. In the world of university or university of applied sciences, the word alumni carries the meaning of a graduate. In Finland the persons, who are working or have worked in educational institutions are also counted as alumni.

The alumni network of universities and universities of applied sciences is an active and established part of the community and plays a central role in the student/enterprise cooperation of the university, as well as the development of education and research activities, thus producing added value for the university and the alumni. The alumni activities aim at a lifetime partnership between the university and the alumni. (Härkönen 2003, 50-53.)

According to Härkönen (2003, 50) Alumni activities can be present in a whole university or only partly in some departments of the university. Alumni activities are supporting the marketing of educational institutions and also helping with the educational growth of the students. Therefore it is important for schools to remember, when they are utilizing the alumni activities that they are voluntary based and value for alumni should be present. Alumni activities should be able to offer direct benefit to the alumni and companies. These kinds of benefits might be lectures/classes, which are free of charge, inexpensive service activities and also thesis work and training possibilities.

There should be at least once a year an event for alumni, which maintains the cooperation between universities and their alumni. At the same time alumni also get opportunities to create networks between themselves. There are several different ways to carry out these events. For example by dividing alumni with their degree programmes, utilizing tutors in alumni events, with the help of lectures, and with different galas. (Härkönen 2003, 53.)

2.2 History of Alumni Activities

The first alumni association was established at Williams College in 1821 in the United States. The early associations assumed many of the roles handled previously by individual volunteers. Alumni directors (for many years called alumni secretaries) became important officers of the university, serving and working closely with institutional leaders and trustees. When schools needed more extensive fundraising, alumni officers directed these efforts. Development officers and separate departments resulted from a need for institutions to reach out to a constituency broader than alumni in order to acquire additional support. This was a watershed event for alumni associations. Programs and events traditionally sponsored by alumni offices were spun off to development offices. The overall result was a decline in the relative importance of the alumni office to the institution. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 1.)

2.3 Alumni Activities in Finland

In Finland alumni activities started in the 1990s, and therefore it is not as developed as in abroad. The journey of alumni activities are just beginning at universities and universities of applied sciences. It has been recently understood how important and significant the networks of graduated students are. Companies and educational institutions have started to take more actively part in alumni activities and help them to develop and grow. In Finland and in other Nordic or Scandinavian countries the focus is on the “twinning activities” which means that the focus is on the contents of the education, the continuing process of intellectual culture, monitoring of work life communities, and recruit of students. (<http://arts.aalto.fi/fi/services/alumni/>.) In Finland alumni activities are voluntary based and mostly free of charge. This is a difference between alumni associations in United States and in Finland, because in America alumni give donations and funding for their former schools. In Finland this is not possible, because of the high rate of taxation. (<http://www.laureanalumnit.fi>.)

Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences have understood the significance of the graduate and their networks and how it has a positive impact to the education. In abroad, for example in the United States and in Great Britain universities have a long history by working side by side with alumni. (Härkönen 2003, 49.)

2.4 Alumni Relations

Alumni activities can mean class meetings, utilization of alumni's knowledge; eg using them as experts in different study areas and also carrying out projects with alumni. Alumni are extremely important cooperation partners of the universities and universities of applied sciences. In Finland alumni activities are quite young and not that many schools are actually utilizing alumni activities and their benefits for both partners. It is up to every university of applied sciences on its own, how well the school is able to utilize alumni in its tasks, areas in work life, and in development activities. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.)

When putting an effort on alumni activities, work life connections and area development makes the position of the school stronger and more efficient. Alumni give feedback about the studies and how they are corresponding to the challenges of the real life. Alumni can also act as a contact and as a mentor for theses, training or projects. Alumni are potential clients for the school regarding continuing education, researches and other development activities of the school. Alumni are also acting as "business cards" of the school. They are the living proof about the education and its level. At universities alumni have had also a remarkable role as fundraisers. Fundraising hasn't been relevant yet at the universities of applied sciences, but in the future this might be the case because of changing laws and smaller funding of the government. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.)

Alumni activities are not as common in Finland as in the United States. Alumni should be invited into the activity in order to get them join in. Alumni should see and experience clearly the reason why they would join in this activity. The school should offer them enough benefits and value that they will get interested. Universities of applied sciences must come out from their comfort zones and meet their alumni. Schools should know their benefit aspects (selling arguments) in order to get alumni to join in development activities. Universities of applied sciences need to put effort and resources to this, as a result all the benefits that they will get out of this are valuable. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.) The trend is to engage alumni in activities that fit best with where they are in their life cycles. Alumni associations need to create job descriptions for each volunteer and each volunteer activity so that alumni are informed and comfortable with what they are asked to do. Alumni associations need to identify

a staff member to be responsible for managing the program that recruits, retains and recognizes volunteers. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 4.)

By opening and offering this concept of alumni activities are the key for the success. Universities of applied sciences should open up their teaching and project planning work, and also be ready to present half-created ideas to alumni and work life networks in order to develop them together. This requires changing of thinking process and tolerating uncertainty. Uncertainty factors in this article are listed as sharing expert knowhow, and even questioning it with work life. (Hohenthal, et al. 2012, 20-29.) There have always been outstanding professionals in alumni association work. Alumni association professionals must have a skill set that is broad and deep. They must be visionaries who also understand the importance of attention to detail. Yet, alumni relations have never been recognized as a profession. The part of the reason for this is that alumni relations live exclusively within the world of academe, as opposed to colleagues in development (fundraising) etc. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 3.)

According to Hohenthal et al. (2012, 20-29) there are several ways how to get alumni to join into activities and participate in them. It is important to engage alumni into activities. This happens by working together. Commitment needs willingness and passion towards extensive co-operation. Commitment toward alumni activities happens only after if alumni have noticed and realized the added value of the activities, and the willingness of the school truly to listen to them and their needs and knowledge. Engaging alumni into activities doesn't happen by fooling or fraud development; it has to happen by doing development work openly and genuinely.

The importance of the inspiring; this comes after engaging alumni and happens quite naturally afterwards. On the other hand inspiring requires some effort in order to maintain and create it. For example organized lectures and seminars might act as a source of inspiration. These events might create new contents and thinking with fresh ideas, which also can be reflected to alumni's own careers. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.) Alumni are also very interested in becoming involved with the other end of the continuum, career services – the institutional output. Alumni of many ages are interested in activities related to careers from networking to simply learning about what alumni have done in their careers. Career programs originally were believed to serve young alumni hoping to build their careers, but alumni associations have found that

mid-career alumni are interested in thinking about second (or third) careers and mature alumni simply like to talk with others and share stories about their own careers. (Clouse Dolbert 2002.)

New efforts by alumni associations to develop on-line services have expanded career services opportunities exponentially. Students and alumni can talk with others in their field in on-line, identify employment opportunities, apply and even be offered positions - all as a result of on-line activities. Career programs are also great ways for alumni to interact with current students and young alumni. More experienced alumni share their knowledge and experiences in career panels or may commit to longer-term relationships by serving as mentors. Another very important student services area has gained in importance among alumni associations. That is working with current students. It is essential to help students to be identified as alumni prior to their graduation. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 5.)

When organizing the events for alumni activities, they have to be carried out in a way that they are taking into account the needs of alumni and their schedules. In other words events should take place at a time, which is the most convenient, and the main ideas should be professionalism, innovation, and a relaxed atmosphere. By taking care of these factors and reflecting them to the events, it will give a clear message to alumni that their co-operation is highly valued, respected and needed. Events should be also organized in a way that methods and actions are corresponding to the wishes of the alumni. In a way this makes sure that alumni want to continue to be part of the activities, make extensive development work, and participate in the events. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.) The division of student affairs or student services provides incredible opportunities for the alumni association. One of the more important areas for alumni engagement is admissions. Alumni talk with prospective students in order to be able to share their own experiences as a student to those who are considering becoming students – they demonstrate the institutional “output” in which prospective students and their parents have a great deal of interest. Alumni can also provide admissions offices with an objective evaluation of a prospective student’s interpersonal skills and assess how he/she will fit with the campus culture. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 5.)

When alumni activities are carried out successfully, they bring a lot of benefits to the schools, alumni, and work life sector. The university of applied sciences makes its connections with work life sector stronger and gets to use an extensive network of experts. This network offers current information on the needs of the work life sector and it can be utilized in education. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.) Alumni can use the network in order to find business partners, clients, and also seek new and fresh information in their own business sector. Alumni seek to connect through career, social, and business networking provided by alumni associations. They are interested in learning more about the academic strengths of their institutions, how it educates the graduated students for careers, exciting developments in student-faculty collaborations and research, and opportunities to be accessible to new things and be ready for a complex and constantly changing world. (www.napagroup.com.)

The work life sector might get also benefit out of this arrangement through the different projects and innovation work which are created between the students and alumni. Of course this whole activity is a very extensive and complex process and needs to have “investments” from many different sectors. Therefore alumni activities should be started with the idea “Start small- Think big”. Basically this idea is listing that even with small resources activities can be started but long-time goals should be set and purposefully tries to reach them along the activities. (Hohenthal et al. 2012, 20-29.)

It is important that alumni activities continue their development and aim to keep their quality level high. Therefore the level of quality should be monitored constantly and actively. Evaluation can be implemented in several ways, for example; by carrying out questionnaires to students and to the personnel and analyzing the results, questionnaires to alumni and analyzing the results, evaluating the aims and goals of the alumni activity (are they reached?), evaluating the budget and the use of it, making the report out of questionnaires, and making the presentation out of the report and presenting it to the management of the educational institution and other funding re-sources. (Härkönen 2003, 54.)

2.5 Institutional Involvement of Alumni Activities

Partnering with different campus departments might provide excellent ways to link with alumni. One of the most important and remarkable connections for alumni is with

academic affairs. After all, the greatest influence the institution has had on the alumnus/alumna is his/her academic experience while being a student. The alumni association can form partnerships with the institution's continuing education department to connect alumni certification and training programs, or programs that simply reply to intellectual savor or curiosity. These realities have led to strengthened relationships and partnerships between alumni organizations and university offices of the development. Some institutions have compounded alumni relations by adding support. For example by organizing reunions to volunteers, giving campaigns at regular reunion intervals, creating situations to develop relationships with the present students and young alumni, and granting funds to technology in order to facilitate these relationships. Others have formed these mutual synergies through carefully arranged messaging and other structural approaches.

(www.napagroup.com.)

This connection is particularly important for international alumni, from both on and offshore programs. Alumni associations have also been successful in partnering with faculty to participate in chapter events, reunions and even on-line discussions or chats. Alumni associations should ensure that faculties are involved with their alumni board and serve on alumni committees. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 4-5.)

Alumni associations should find opportunities to recognize and reward faculty members for outstanding teaching, research and service. Alumni should serve on faculty boards and committees, and be part of important search committees. Many institutions now have staff members in academic colleges, schools or departments whose primary responsibility is to work with alumni yet whose employment is through the academic unit and/or development. It is incumbent that the alumni association ensures staff in the colleges and academic units understand the importance of the units and the associations working in tandem to advance the goals of the institution. While this model can also be established to overseas programs, the vast majority of external programs do not have local employees to work with alumni. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 4-5.) The suitable model usually rises from strategic plan goals of an association. The long-term thinking and recruiting from all institutional and association levels internally and externally are all part of this. The alumni give also feedback through surveys. Trends include universal memberships which highlight involvement and engagement rather than financial ground through free services and sedimentary advantages based on ad-

ditional levels of support, in comprehensive surroundings, starting with student membership. (www.napagroup.com.)

2.6 Communicating with Alumni

There are several different ways how to serve alumni by communicating with them. Interaction can take place via multiple different channels and the aim is to find the best solution to reach out alumni and serve them in the most efficient way. Communication is clearly one of the most important goals recognized throughout alumni relations are communication – considering both input and output. With the electronic capabilities, opportunities for effective communication with alumni are increasing. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

Electronic communications

With electronic “relationship” alumni can be increased and improved. The information flow with each graduate will provide them with communication and services targeted to their individual wants and/or needs. In addition, the alumni association benefits in a number of ways. Of great importance is that having alumni communicate with the association electronically can save staff time. Alumni who update their own records, or who register for events or pay dues on-line allow staff to spend their time in more direct service to alumni, rather than on handling paper or simply receiving information over the telephone. It is also expected that alumni database will be richer, more robust and more accurate. The alumni association is also able to deliver information electronically much more efficiently and effectively. With increasing concern about budgets, sending information electronically eliminates postage and printing costs – all rising almost daily. The other great advantage to electronic communication is time of delivery. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

Since almost everything done in alumni relations is time-sensitive, electronic communication provides us an opportunity to notify and/or remind alumni of events without worrying about how long it may take our event reminder to find our alumnus’ home mailbox. For international alumni, this is a very exciting development. It is easier to keep alumni “attached” in ways not possible even a few years ago. The down side of electronic communication is with the use of blast emails for alumni. “Spam” has be-

come horrific and alumni associations must take every precaution that their communication with alumni is of value and not viewed as an intrusion. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

Electronic communications will continue to increase. Alumni will communicate electronically more frequently and more extensively, and alumni associations will do the same. Electronic communications will provide alumni with more and better information and thus, service from their associations. Electronic communications will provide alumni associations with more and better information, and will allow them to operate more efficiently. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

Print vs. face to face methods of serving alumni

Many alumni officers have begun to question whether the time has come for us to abandon print communications to alumni. It is not found that effective anymore. Therefore any discussion of serving alumni through our communication efforts must include face-to face communication. After all, we are about relationships – finding ways to attach alumni. Another factor influences the need for alumni relations to continue to focus on face-to face communication. More and more alumni associations are recognizing that they must learn more about the desires of their alumni. Budget and staff constraints demand it. If they are to best serve alumni, associations need to know what alumni want, and how alumni want information delivered from their associations. Therefore, alumni associations must commit to research and to surveying their alumni regularly. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

Print will become an enhancement to electronic communications, but will not disappear, at least for another generation. Face-to-face communication will always have a place with alumni relations. Alumni associations must continue to find ways to connect alumni with their alma maters in personal ways that remind them of their college experiences. (Clouse Dolbert 2002, 8-9.)

2.7 Social Media and Alumni Activities

My theoretical framework will consist of social media and social media marketing and offer information of communication channels and information systems in alumni activities. Social media are the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility. (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 2.)

Social media is a strong communication channel nowadays and therefore it is widely used as in a tool by sending information and advertising different activities. Social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web and it allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. (Kaplan, et al. 2010, 60.)

Within this general definition, there are various types of social media that need to be distinguished further. However, although most people would probably agree that Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and Second Life are all part of this large group, there is no systematic way in which different social media applications can be categorized. New sites appear in cyberspace every day, so it is important that any classification scheme takes into account applications which may be forthcoming. (Kaplan, et al. 2010, 60.)

Social media also provides new ways for a university to be able to interact with their alumni. Some specific examples include: hosting, contests, asking opinions, sharing photos/videos, and soliciting feedback from alumni through these networks. This can help improve the services that offered alumni because you will be able to adjust to what people want. A university is able to actively engage in a dialogue and make an educated decision in finding out what type of outreach their alumni body is looking to receive, what type of information they want to have access to, and what sort of affinity they possess towards the institution. (Makrez 2011, 234.)

The Internet originally withdrew people because of the anonymity it gave. (McKenna & Barg 2000, 41) Nowadays with the maturation of social networking sites people are utilizing that anonymity factor and are using the Internet to socialize with others.

(Jones & Fox 2009, 6) In the social media land; where individuals have a belief that they do not want to be brought out to, how do you involve and engage them in discussion with the intent promoting a product or service? Successful engaging with individuals in social networks demands building of trust and relationships, promoting value and becoming the go-to resource when the spectators are prepared to buy what you sell. However the trust you create must to be largely subject to your ability to convince your audience that your intention is pure. Be aware that your message exists within a larger ecosystem that is out of your control and engage and involve the consumers with this in mind. Become an active member of the community, network or environment and take part in the activities with the audience to create a true trust. (Kowalik 2011, 226.)

Social media tools are increasing in use across higher education and Twitter hash tags, live blogs, Facebook events, and Flickr groups are becoming a regular feature of academic conferences and events. In addition to providing essential services, developing community has long been fundamental element of the university life programs. The potential opportunity to enhance university life and community development through the creative and effective implementation of social media technologies is an important and emerging phenomenon. Social media initiatives and activities are transforming the very nature of collegiate life. (Wankel 2011, 167-190.)

Social media provides institutions an possibilities for a new level of engagement and involvement with potential students, alumni, donors and community members. Social media surroundings include both your potential students and alumni, creating it a great place to connect with them about your institution and programs. People are also using traditional communication sites and services (think webmail and discussion groups) less and less and making a choice to use Facebook and other social networks instead. (Kowalik 2011, 215-216.) Social networking can be a great resource for recruitment efforts, and could be very beneficial in this process. However, they still believe the majority of the focus should be strengthening the experience perspective students have on official websites. (Noel-Levitz 2007.)

Social media provides new avenues to reach out to people, connect with them, engage in a conversation and foster a relationship. Currently a prospective student cannot apply to your school through Facebook and a donor cannot give a gift via Twitter. The

end goal is to funnel the individual to your website where they can take action ie. apply to your school, get more information, and give donations. (Kowalik 2011, 216.) Internet and its popularity are based on “new communality”. New communities have a significant economic potential. (Koskela, et al. 2007, 27.) Institution can do the most creative things on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, but if students get to your site and cannot figure out the call to action, the action that is requested by a marketer’s content (either from an advertising banner or website copy) such as how to apply or find information about degree, you have failed. Do not let the goodwill you have built through social media be destroyed by a poor functioning website. Before you establish why you are using social networks, examine your foundation, ie. your institutions website. (Kowalik 2011, 216.)

Involved alumni are alumni who will contribute, and then ask how they can do more. If a college has knowledge how to elaborate and engage alumni, it is well on the way of monetary health and growth. Although the advantages of utilizing social media are multiple, alumni offices, with limited human and financial resources, can now reach a growing number of graduates. (Kowalik 2011, 21.) A network can be activated with the help of interaction, and it can work as a source of information, group of professionals or in a social support. (Koskela, et al. 2007, 27). It still requires work, creating a Facebook page and Twitter account is just the beginning of the road. The overload of the information is another trap. Adding information to a social network is a cheap way to awake the consciousness of thousands of people about alumni events or graduates’ achievements. The messages, if they arrive too regularly, can be seen as a spam, which might poison the relationship between the university, and alumni. Social media is remarkably effective in engaging and involving younger alumni, who are not replying to old-fashioned marketing campaigns. (Kowalik 2011, 218.)

2.8 Social Communities

Social media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while social networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others. Social networking is the use of communities of interest to connect to others. You can use social media to facilitate social networking sites (hereinafter SNS). Or you can network by leveraging social media.(www.examiner.com/article/social-media-vs-social-networking-what-s-the-difference.)

In the alumni events, when we considering social media everyone must be at “invited in” and focus on the starting implementation of social media as it concerns to alumni relations and collaboration, along with the relevancy within the advanced world. Social media strategies are a new and an effective way to link, offer knowledge, and activate those interested in the university. This technology and change in interpersonal behavior allows the changes to form demanding, tightly woven, and diverse university community a hotspot for innovative ideas /active discussion and practical networking. As the world links in totally new way, so do students, and therefore, so do alumni. (Makrez 2011, 229-230.)

Why a university engages with SNS is an important question. The justification of investment must be met, and a comprehensive plan for the implementation of social media initiatives must be formed. Picking deeper into societal norms and beliefs that need to be institutionalized before one can be truly successful in implementing a strategic investment of time, money and brainpower. Then looking at key examples on how others were able to be successful at using SNS for alumni relations will prove to be helpful tying a practical web of social media initiatives that are effective at forming a virtual community prepared to share thoughts, questions, and resources. (Makrez 2011, 230.) Social networking sites operate as an addition of the type of internet communication. As such, they do promote new creative ways for students to link and new challenges and opportunities for students’ social engagement. (McEwan 2011, 20.) The influence of the experimental uses of SNS within the context of a diverse alumni community- which connects creatively to emerging campus wide initiatives are a complicated and effective realm to take part in. It is challenging to think out-of-the-box when it comes to knowing an answer that is suitable for specific institutional goals will hopefully inspire a creative, fun, and interactive flow of ideas, along with the courage to try new innovative things. (Makrez 2011, 230.)

In order to create an impactful marketing compliment within the social networking sites one may want to evaluate the networks available for usage, determine the resources available to allocate to the cause, the objectives that are hoped to be accomplished with the implementation of a SNS strategy. It is important to examine some best practices and then try to implement the most relevant ones to the demographic and constituency they are trying to influence. (Makrez 2011, 231.) Student affairs pro-

professionals should become aware of the ways that students engage with social networking sites in order to leverage opportunities for furthering student integration while remaining aware of the limitations for community building that social networking sites present (McEwan 2011, 20.)

Key objectives for developing a social networking policy within alumni relations may range from fundraising to alumni research to information sharing to alumni activities involvement. Something that is important to remember while trying to achieve all those objectives is that there is a definite expectation on the SNS for informal yet professional communication. Alumni are using these SNS whether the university they attended is or not, and they are connecting with other alumni from the same community. (Makrez 2011, 232-233.) The diversity of staff involved could also reflect the variety of social media use. Social networking sites allow staff to launch online promotional campaigns and promote upcoming university events, responsibilities that are traditionally held by marketing and communication departments. (Merrill 2011, 38.) Allowing alumni to become part in the university can take place through SNS. In addition to emailing, which is also not comprehensive solution, social media channels give another interactive way to promote events, solicit feedback and share news. At the end of the day, active alumni are contributing alumni. Alumni offices are continually searching for new ways to keep alumni engaged. Even if they are not physically attending events on campus, engaging them in this brand community allows the university to develop a broader base of those who have vested interest in the success of enterprise. (Makrez 2011, 232-233.)

There seems to be significant link between alumni relation and admissions. This relationship has allowed the two offices to find compatible and beneficial ways to interact with one another through SNS. Alumni are constantly looking for new ways to be engaged with the university and admissions always need new ways to recruit new students, therefore, the two departments are able to join forces to recruit alumni admissions volunteers via social networks and have LinkedIn group aimed at that audience. (Makrez 2011, 237-238.) According to Reuben (2008, 11) social networking sites offer advancement professionals a great opportunity for keeping in touch with alumni after they graduate. Facebook is one of the popular tools they are now using to keep in touch with recent alumni, alumni that are more in touch with their universities than ever before.

Using Facebook to link to a YouTube channel to showcase a new alumni business, or student accomplishment is a great way to increase viewer activity and hopefully evoke some emotion or response. Advertising events on these SNS through event pages or RSS feed technologies is an effective, quick, low-cost marketing mechanism to reach a broad audience of alumni, whether it is a quest speaker, a commencement reception or a sporting event. SNS allow the alumni office hand-on tool to inform their alumni community. (Makrez 2011, 237-238.) The social integration of students within a campus community is vital in enhancing their college experiences. Researches have sought to determine how best to promote successful social integration for university students. Traditionally, on campus orientations and residence hall activities have been used to foster student social integration. However, Facebook and other social networking sites (SNSs) can be used for social integration among students in ways that were never before possible. (McEwan 2011, 3.)

Recent research shows that 92,2% of students highly engaged in social media (more than an hour a day) and 73,4% of students who use social media less than an hour a day rate their connection to their friends at their university as high or very high (Junco 2009). Those numbers have a greater implication for alumni relations when taken in the context of previous research on social integration and institutional support, which found, “The greater level of social integration, the greater level of subsequent commitment to the social institution.” (Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson 1997, 106.)

3 DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES

Lastly I will put focus on the previous studies of the development of services. I will utilize that information in my thesis work. Even though the alumni activity is voluntary based it should be evaluated and make improvements regularly. A service entails a unique experience between the service provider and service customer. The constellation of features and characteristics inherent in a service offering takes place during its development. (Posselt & Först 2012, 8.) I will also put my focus on customer involvement and their role in service development.

3.1 Services

In the literature, a service has often been defined as something that becomes “real” when a customer interacts with some specific prerequisites such as organizational structures, activities, people and other customers. (Lovelock 1996, 5). During this interaction, there are many factors that affect to the customer’s experience. The service interaction is surrounded by physical and communication elements that provide information on the nature of the service and give clues as to its quality. According to Zeithaml & Bitner (2003, 3) put in the simplest terms services are deeds, processes, and performances.

While we rely on the simple, broad definition of services, we should be aware that over time services and the service sector of the economy have been defined in subtly different ways (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 3). In a service driven economy, companies must develop new and better services to stay competitive and make profit. Service competition and development of new services which create customer value are major challenges not only for service companies, but also for manufacturing companies and public service providers. Since services are activities and interactions and not physical objects, we cannot apply concepts, models and techniques developed for product development. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, v.)

Today, services are infusing into our daily lives in many different forms. Through technology, customers are able to utilize services from all over the world. A service perspective is fundamentally a management perspective which offers an insight and assistance for any type of organization that needs to expand their competitive advantage beyond the core product solution to customer problem. It emphasizes on a deep understanding of the internal value-generating processes of the customer which will render services that match customer needs. Therefore a true understanding of the customer is the driver of competitive advantage in today’s business environment. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, 3-4.) Naturally some customers are more demanding than others, having greater tenderness to, and higher expectations of, service. Enduring service intensifiers are individual, stability factors that lead the customer to heightened tenderness to service. One of the most remarkable of these factors can be named leading service expectations, which apply when customer expectations are driven by another person or group of people. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 67.)

The service perspective consequently refers to a focus business from a customer's point of view, focusing on how to create customer value when using or consuming the service. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, 4.) Customers perceive services in terms of the quality of the service and how satisfied they are overall with their experiences. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 85). This is naturally a challenge for many organizations to become truly customer-oriented. Therefore only few companies have access to their customers' true needs and wants, and even if they have this knowledge, this information is not disseminated throughout the organization and it does not lead to appropriate actions. This is thus a challenge to the management. Customer involvement could be viewed as a tool to help become more customer oriented. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, 4.)

3.2 Co-Creating Value with Customers

New service development calls for concepts, models, and techniques based on the logic of service and it emphasizes value creation through services. A service management theory implies that value is co-created with the customer and is assessed on the basis of the value in use. The customers are directly involved in the value creation process in different ways. Customers can also contribute in the development and design of new services and products. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, v.) The value creation process centers on individuals and their co-creation experiences. New premises inevitably lead to new implications for a business. The interaction between consumers and firms becomes the new locus of co-creation of value. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, 16.)

New service concepts and service offerings are also developed together with customers. Customer involvement in a service development is a relatively new area. A customer involvement refers to becoming close with customers in order to learn from and with them. (Edwarsson, et al. 2006, v.) To co-create value with consumers will demand increasingly in use of multiple channels of their choices, a function of the consumer's competence, backgrounds, interests, and needs. Thus, companies will have to manage multiple channels and ensure a consistent quality of experience for individual consumers across these channels. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, 43.) There are growing markets for services with increasing dominance of the services in economies worldwide. The tremendous growth and economic contribution of the service sector

have drawn increasing attention to the issues and problems of the service sector industries. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 3.)

A service-dominant logic (hereinafter S-D logic) represents a departure from the traditional, foundational, goods dominant logic (hereinafter G-D logic) of exchange, in which goods were the focus of exchange and services represented a special case of goods a logic that marketing inherited from an emphasis on operant resources, dynamic resources that act upon other resources. Service dominant logic views applied specialized skills and knowledge as the focus of economic exchange and one of the fundamental foundations upon which a society is built. Thus, it rests on the premises that, in order to improve their individual and collective well-being, humans exchange the service- the application of specialized skills and knowledge- that they can provide to others for the service that they need from others. If goods are involved in the exchange, they are seen as mechanisms for service provision. (Vargo & Lusch 2006, 43.)

A service dominant logic implies that service is the foundation for all exchange; the function of goods is to enable service that is, goods represent a special case of service provision, one that has always been a fairly small subset. It is perspective of a model that includes the fundamental assumption that exchange is driven by goods (G-D logic) that the importance of service is just now becoming apparent, and that an economy is perceived to be transitioning from goods focused to service focused. (Vargo & Lusch 2006, 45.)

Value cannot be created independently in manufacturing and consumption. S-D logic, on the other hand, implies a consumer orientation. Since a service is defined in terms of benefit being co-created with the consumer, rather than embedded in output, no separate explication or modification is necessary. The consumer or more precisely, consumers multiple parties in an exchange are the foundation of S-D logic. With S-D logic, the consumer orientation becomes redundant. S-D logic represents a somewhat subtle, but potentially significant departure from the way that we have been taught, both explicitly and implicitly, about exchange. It shifts the focus away from goods to service, from operand resources to operant resources, from being to doing, and somewhat less precisely, from what is exchange to the process of exchange and from tangible to intangible. It also refocuses on the role of an exchange in general, not only as it

relates to marketing, but also of its role in commerce and society. As such, S-D logic might provide insights useful for reconsidering and reformulating the models, theories, and paradigms that guide the thinking about these activities and institutions. (Vargo & Lusch 2006, 47, 51.)

One particularly intriguing possibility is for S-D logic to provide the philosophical and conceptual foundation for the development of a service science. The intrigue stems from the fact that a service science has the potential of taking the perspective of value co-creation and exchange beyond the market by providing a system orientation that takes the issues out of the economic arena and re-contextualize them. Thus, ironically, it has the potential of shedding light on the role of exchange between and among service systems at different levels of analysis (eg. individuals, organizations, social units, nations, etc.), thus enriching marketing in ways that are difficult from its usual tighter, enterprise, economic, and normative focus, even when enhanced through S-D logic. (Vargo & Lusch 2006, 9.)

3.3 New Service Strategy Development

Research suggest that without a clear new product or service strategy, a well-planned portfolio of new products and services, and an organizational structure that facilitates product development via ongoing communications and cross-functional sharing of responsibilities, front-end decisions become ineffective. Thus a product portfolio strategy and a defined organizational structure for a new product or service development are critical and they are the foundations for success. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 227.)

The development of a services strategy locates at the heart of the service promoter organization. Increasingly, services promoters are finding themselves operating in very fluent market areas that are accessible to ongoing change. These alters are characterized by an increased requirement for services, growing costs for service organizations, difficulty in accomplishing a balance between the development of standardized or personalized services and the new kind of use of technology. When required with these market conditions, service organizations need to take a well-structured approach to the development of the strategy.

(<http://smartamarketing.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/developing-a-service-strategy-1/>)

The types of new services that will be appropriate will depend on the organization's goals, vision, capabilities, and growth plans. By defining a new service strategy (possibly in terms of markets, types of services, time horizon for development, profit criteria, or other relevant factors), the organization will be in a better position to begin generating specific ideas. For example, it may focus its growth on new services at a particular level of the described continuum from major innovations to style changes. Or the organization may define its new services strategy even more specifically in terms of particular markets or market segments or in terms of specific profit generation goals. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 227.)

3.4 Service Innovation

Service innovations concern different dimensions of services, such as the service concept, the customer interface, the service delivery, or the technology involved (De Jong & Vermeulen, 2003, 9). A new idea is a starting point for an innovation. When the idea is successfully developed and implemented to create new benefits, such as profit, an innovation emerges. An Innovation can deal with products, services, or processes. (De Jong & Vermeulen 2003, 41.) The migration to experience innovation is not an easy one. So much of managerial energy in large firms is focused on a product innovation. The internal debate is about the time to develop new features and to phase these functions into new products and services. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, 71.)

Because of the interactive nature of services, it has become more important that services are co-developed by the producer and the intended user or customer. Consequently, some issues may arise such as the intellectual property issue where two parties could claim the ownership of the resulting service. (Hipp & Herstatt 2006, 269.) Under the pressure for a cost reduction, most managers focus on efficiency and regard innovation as an attractive distraction. Furthermore, even when managers do focus on innovation, they often become preoccupied with developing an efficient process for innovation. In the end, this invariability forces managers to concentrate on internal, firm-centric competences rather than on the consumer. In truth, however, efficiency and innovation are not opposed. They are interconnected; successful innovation must have efficiency embedded in it. The success of an innovation depends on the operational efficiency with which it is executed. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, 71-72.)

3.5 Service Development Process

Many models illustrating new service development (hereinafter NSD) stem from the new product development (hereinafter NPD) theory that is much more developed than the theory concerning services. The NSD process has been described in the literature by sequential process models and, on the other hand, by models that emphasize an organizational perspective (Stevens & Dimitriadis 2005, 39.) The service development process can be divided into five phases; from the generation of the original idea to the market launch. New ideas are collected and evaluated during the definition phase. Numerous proposals are evaluated primarily in term of how they correspond to the corporate strategy, the company's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the present and future market environment. It is possible in this process to integrate the customer as the triggering factor whether existing information is evaluated in the company or new ideas are elaborated in customer workshops. (Nägele 2006, 252.)

After the idea has been refined and customer requirements are clear, work begins with the concept of the individual components of the service itself. A process can be developed with the business customer, and it is possible to make sure, at a very early stage, that processes are geared toward customers and that all the modules are designed in a way which complies with the customer's requirements. (Nägele 2006, 252-253.) A new service or product development is rarely a completely linear process. Many companies are finding that to speed up a new service development, some steps can be worked on simultaneously, and in some instances a step may even be skipped. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 225-226). The service must be tested before it is launched on the market. Critical elements must be rectified prior to a market launch, whereas important but non-critical complaints are taken into account in a later revision phase. The customer therefore tests and helps to optimize prototype services. (Nägele 2006, 252-253.)

In the final phase, the customer with whom the service has been developed can play a supporting role during its market launch. As an "innovator" or "early adapter", the customer is in a position to help the product make deeper inroads into the market. Surveys of a broader base of customers, as well as a documentation of customer responses recorded in the call center or by customer advisers, reflect the degree of ac-

ceptance enjoyed by the service in the market. This information can be used in turn to make adaptations to the service or can be used in the development of entirely new services. (Nägele 2006, 253.) In these cases the next version of the service is often in planning stages at the same time with the current version being launched. Even if the stages are handled simultaneously, however, the important checkpoints must be passed along the way to maximize the chances of success. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 226.)

Based on a previous service development phase model, it is apparent that most companies integrate their customers in the first two phases. It is crucial that projects pursued by service developers are supported by the company management. The service development concerns the planning and provision of service provisions resources, getting across the customer benefits of an original new service, assessing service ideas, determining customers' willingness to pay, and estimating costs. (Nägele 2006, 253-254.)

3.6 Customer Interaction in a Service Development Process

Customer interaction has been advocated as a potentially powerful tool for developing successful new services. Specifically, it is seen as an effective tool to jump start the idea generation process for new services, to create value for customers, and to effectively manage the overall innovation process in a firm. Despite the powerful benefits of customer interaction, there are a majority of service firms that are unwilling to expose themselves to the perceived costs and risks of customer interaction. Some service managers lack confidence and trust in their own abilities, and therefore an interaction with customers is not as smooth as it should be. The risks of confidentiality and a possible lack of customer cooperation are also the key reasons why service firms hesitate to use customers in their innovation programs. (Alam 2006, 15.)

The role of the customer in services marketing becomes evident in the service encounter. In this encounter face to face, ear to ear, letter to letter, email to email, customer to website and customer-to-machine a service may be developed, produced, and delivered with input from several sources. (Gummesson 2006, 82.) With customer interaction, it is possible to develop a differentiated new service with unique benefits and better value for the customer. It is a key issue because today's customers are more

sophisticated and demanding, and search for a superior value in a new service. (Alam 2006, 16.)

Customer interaction may help shorten a development cycle time, also known as “time to market.” The process of customer interaction may yield the most up-to-date information about customer preferences and needs that are changing fast. This potentially reduces the need for alterations in a service delivery process in the later stages, because a firm can collect and process customer information for its new service development projects in a concurrent basis. (Alam 2006, 17.) With some expectations, companies do not yet seem to take advantage of opportunities offered by customer power in marketing. (Gummesson 2006, 86) .

3.7 Role of the User Involvement in a Service Development Process

It can be easily argued that since the customer influences the perceived quality of service delivery, the customer should be a natural participant in the development process. (Co-creating value with customer) However, this view has not been particularly evident in the literature on new service development or in new product development literature, there are exceptions. (Sanden, et al. 2006, 35.) Customer involvement is defined as processes, deeds, and interactions where a product or service provider collaborates with a current or (potential) customer at the program, project, and/or stage level of innovation, to anticipate customers’ latent needs and to develop a new product or service accordingly. (Thomke 2003, 4.)

A customer involvement entails a different approach to value creation in a new product and service development. In a development project where the customer is involved to a high degree, value is created interactively among the parties. This implies a refined role distribution, a longer relationship, and the possibility of acquiring new knowledge. (Wikström 1996, 4.) Customer involvement researchers have different views on what constitutes customer involvement. Some researchers believe that customer involvement involves all types of market research. (E.g. Alam 2002, 30.) Others argue that customer involvement is different from traditional market research because it is a proactive approach of learning from and with customers to uncover latent needs. (Sanden, et al. 2006, 51-53.)

In terms of market research techniques it was found out that companies rely on internally collected information, such as information from sales personnel or customer complaints. The second most popular technique is observations. It was found out that surprisingly a primary reason to engage customers was that it provided an opportunity to market the organization. For example (de Bretanni & Cooper 1992, 21.) argue that the main advantage in customer involvement is the possibility of developing deep customer insight in terms of customers' expressed and unexpressed needs, preferences, and behavior, that is knowledge that is vital if development efforts are to be successful. (Sanden, et al. 2006, 51-53.)

There are different key elements for describing different types of user involvement. The first is the objective/purpose of involvement which describes why users are involved in a new service development. For instance the purpose can be to gain new service ideas, to reduce cycle time, or to improve user relations. Then second stages of involvement are where the new service development processes are. The question is; are the users involved? There are ten stages in which users are involved: strategic planning, idea generation, idea screening, business analysis, formation of the functional team, service and process design, personnel training, service testing and pilot run, test marketing, and commercialization. The third type is about an intensity of involvement and simply how intense is the user involvement? (Alam 2002, 252.)

An User involvement has resulted in ideas for new innovative and useful services, and therefore a customer involvement is heavily dependent on how an involvement is managed. The contradictory positions of a theory suggesting both a positive and a negative outcome from "listening to the customer" are thus put into perspective by the fact that the provided causal data show that users can be valuable contributors of new services. (Magnusson 2003, 118-119.)

3.8 Service Concept Development and Evaluation

It is common that evaluation requires producing knowledge about an attributes and aspects of a new service or technology that relate to its prospective effectiveness from different perspectives. The task of building measures to assess these aspects is furthermore complex if the research is carried out in collateral with a service development. It demands not only defining and specifying existing clinical knowledge and

practices, but also assuming and being prepared in ways which practices will be transformed in the new system and designing research instruments that seize such modifications. (<http://www.bmj.com/content/327/7425/1205>)

Once an idea has been regarded as a good fit with both the basic business and the new service strategies; it is ready for an initial development. The inherent characteristics of services, particularly intangibility and simultaneous production and consumption, place complex demands on this phase of the process. After a clear definition of the concept, it is important to produce a description of the service that represents its specific features and characteristics, and then to determine initial customer and employees responses to the concept. The roles of customer, and employees in the delivery process would also be described. The new service concept would be evaluated afterwards by asking employees, and customers whether they understand the idea of the proposed service, whether they are favorable to the concept, and whether they feel it reached and satisfied the unmet need. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 228-229.)

3.9 Quality Level of Services

According to Finnish Trade, and Industry Ministry (2004, 23-24) quality refers to a compatibility with customers' requirements. Quality is linked to the products and services which are defined to offer minimum values. A product which reaches required minimum values has been thought to be of high quality. Quality can be monitored through a quality culture. The elements of a quality culture are quality management (aims of quality, measuring and improving) and commitment to maintain and improve quality. In a company, where a quality culture is highly developed definition of the quality is understood extensively and comprehensively. In this kind of a company the usual way of thinking is quite matter orientated.

It is often asked, what the optimal level of good quality service is. The answer depends on different factors such as a strategy of the company and the expectations of the customers, and these two factors are dependent on each other. An acceptable level of quality appears when it fulfills the expectations of the customer, but doesn't surprise with its manner. Good quality is interesting to the customers, and the customers are also willing to continue their interaction with service mediators. (Grönroos 2009, 141-142.)

A Quality of service and the management program consist of seven different factors, which are an idea of service development, managing the expectations of the customers, managing the end result of the service, internal marketing, physical environment (scenery of the service) and managing physical resources, managing information technology, and managing the interaction with customers. If an organization has decided to follow a service strategy the quality of service managing program leads the way to necessarily management actions. (Grönroos 2009, 156.) A quality management and the quality system are formed from the descriptions of the activities, the actual activity and the proof of the activity. The description of the activity includes the descriptions of the actual activity, and the controlling and developing descriptions of the activity. The actual activity means that the activities are done in the agreed and described manner in each situation. In a situation that is not described in the activity process, the activities are executed by using common sense. (Pesonen 2007, 53-54.)

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

I will start my data collection part by introducing the situation of international alumni activity in Mamk and representing facts about the current aspects of the activity. The next topic is benchmarking research which was the qualitative research method in my thesis process. Lastly I will also give information about my quantitative research which was carried out as a survey.

4.1 Description of Alumni Activities in Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences

Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (Mamk) lies at the heart of the beautiful Finnish Lake District in South-Savo region. Mamk is a modern higher education institution, offering high quality education and a variety of different study fields. Mamk has degree programmes available at both the Bachelor's and Master's levels. The students can choose from 18 degree programmes, three of which are in English, although master level programmes are not offered in English. There are over 720 new students starting in studies leading to a degree every year, and the total amount of students is about 4500. Cooperation with Russia is one focus area. There are approximately 400 staff members employed at Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences, of which 200 are

full-time lecturers. About 40 of the staff hold a doctoral or licentiate degree. (<http://www.mamk.fi/muas>)

There are currently over 1000 graduates of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences registered as an alumnus/alumna. (http://www.mamk.fi/mikkeli_uas/alumni) Mamk is constantly doing development work regarding alumni activities. Last year alumni activities got approximately 200-300 new alumni, which is 1/3 from the graduated students. The change in Asio (student portal) has had effect on the figures. Students can register themselves in Asio at the same time, when they are applying for graduation. Mamk has put together a team which is involved in every aspect of the alumni activities. There are personnel from education services, communications service, quality services and the student body Mamok. Every degree programme has its own person selected to be responsible for the alumni activities. (Interview with Kauppinen)

The head of department is part of educational services and it makes decisions regarding the budget. These people form a team for alumni activities and they run its operations. It depends on the situation that what is to be done together and with a centralized manner. In the beginning, the alumni activities at Mamk were mostly in Finnish. One reason for this was that degree programmes were also mostly in Finnish. English degree programmes are younger than the Finnish degree programmes. Communication in English started a little afterwards. In Mamk, operations of alumni activities are not as developed in English as in Finnish, because for example newsletter is mostly in Finnish and most of the events are in Finnish too. Communication channels are mostly as developed in English as in Finnish, but regarding the whole activity there are many things, which are not as developed in English as in Finnish. (Interview with Kauppinen)

Mamk has several development areas regarding alumni activities such as, international alumni activities and its services, because Mamk hasn't been able to reach that many international alumni and there are several potential international alumni, who are possible candidates to be registered at as an alumnus/alumna. It is very important that Mamk is able to get connected with them. In other words communication with international alumni should be more effective. Other challenges are how to deal with alumni of abolished degree programmes, and how to reach them and get them still involved in the activities. Lastly Mamk intends to find a way to attract the current students to join

in alumni activities, when they graduate, and also to find out what is the source of their motivation regarding activities and what is the value what they are looking for. Furthermore Mamk aims to activate current alumni and make them take part in activities in more daily basis. (Interview with Kauppinen)

Even though many people are not aware of the fact that Mamk has alumni association which was established in 2008. Unfortunately it never worked in practice. Bigger alumni events are held every third year, and in the autumn 2014 there should be the next one. These bigger events contain programme also in English. There are also smaller events which are held of the degree programme level and these events take place more regularly. Most of the events are still in Finnish and Mamk is trying to develop more activities in English to its international alumni. All the alumni events which have been held in Mamk, have received good feedback from alumni. After the first bigger alumni event, alumni were hoping to get more “get together” events with social aspects, so Mamk has organized reunions for alumni inside of the bigger events. Expertise lectures are not that interesting to alumni of Mamk, although when lectures are organized in the degree programme level alumni are usually interested in participating in these events. (Interview with Kauppinen)

Overall alumni activities should be stabilized as a concept in order to explain them to current students and current alumni. Therefore it would also be crucial that internal marketing of alumni activities and possibilities of the alumni activities are utilized properly. Alumni activities should be part of life of university of applied sciences in its everyday activities and by this way it would become more familiar to everybody. Mamk is focused on all of these areas and the alumni work team aims at getting more visibility to alumni activities of Mamk. Mamk has also an online newsletter which is sent to the alumni, who are registered to the alumni activities. The newsletter is mostly in Finnish, but some parts are in English, eg if there have been an interviews with international alumni. Mamk has Facebook sites directly for the alumni activities. Mamk uses websites of the school in order to reach alumni and give them information. These sites are in Finnish and in English. Mamk distributes flyers of the alumni activities, when the students graduate. Every degree programme has also own person, who is selected to be responsible for alumni activities and they have their own connections with the alumni. (Interview with Kauppinen)

Mamk wants to network with its alumni and other way around alumni can come to school and share their work path and experiences with students. Mamk aims to find training places and topics for theses by the help of the current alumni. Mamk receives important feedback from alumni and gets significant information of work life situation, and the current requirement of the jobs. This is a way to improve education in the degree programme level and Mamk aims to fulfill all the current requirements regarding educational aspects, which are connected with becoming work life. Alumni are also applicants for Open University of applied sciences and for the continuing education courses. Mamk hopes to get more visibility for Mamk by the help of alumni activities. This is especially important to marketing activities of the school. (Interview with Kauppinen)

In alumni activities of Mamk there are big differences between Finnish degree programmes regarding alumni activities. This has been noticed in the events, because from some degree programmes a lot of former students will participate actively and from some not. The most active alumni come from the degree programmes in Environmental Technology, Business Management and Forest Industry. The alumni contact person of Mamk believed that it was because of the long traditions and history of these degree programmes. In English degree programmes there are not that many differences regarding the alumni activities. These degree programmes are younger and alumni activities don't start without back-ground. (Interview with Kauppinen)

4.2 Qualitative Research

In this study I will use qualitative research approach. As a qualitative method I will carry out a benchmarking research with four different universities of applied sciences by interviewing one person in charge of alumni activities. By this way I am able to get the perspectives of the universities of applied sciences and able to compare their actions regarding alumni activities.

Qualitative research intends to gain a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. It intends to promote a definite version of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. (www.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa696/696quali.htm.) Its focus is on discovering true inner meanings and new insights. Qualitative research is less struc-

tured than most quantitative approaches. It does not rely on self-response questionnaires containing structured response formats. Instead, it is more researcher-dependent in that the researcher must extract meaning from unstructured responses. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 133) Qualitative research is also called ethnomethodology or field research. It offers data about human groups in different kinds of social settings. Qualitative research does not introduce treatments or manipulate variables, or determine the researcher's operative definitions of variables on the participants. Instead it lets the meaning rise from the participants. It is more flexible and it can be added to the setting. Concepts, data collection tools, and data collection methods can be established as the research progresses. Qualitative research intends to get a better understanding through first-hand experience, truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations. It intends to understand how the participants obtain meaning from their environment, and how their meaning influences their behavior
(www.csulb.edu/~msaintg/ppa696/696quali.htm.)

4.3 Benchmarking Research

Xerox Corporation is one of the pioneers of the benchmarking research. Xerox was established in 1959 and in its early years, it was mostly focused on copy machines by making them. However in 1981 the market share of Xerox dropped to 35 % because of its cost-effective competitors, which were selling similar products with same prices, which were the prices for Xerox to make its products. Xerox started a radical cost-effective programme where almost every function of the organization was compared to the other companies and their functions. After a tough changing program the amount of subcontractors got smaller, compatibility improved, quality problems decreased with one- thirds, production costs dropped by 50%, and production time improved with two-thirds. The amount of the employees shrank, when the amount of production grew. This comparison and the changes which it brought along started to carry the name benchmarking (Ross 2000, 258-259.)

Benchmarking is a process that bridges the gap between great ideas and a great performance. An organization that has defined opportunity for improved performance identifies another organization (or unit within its own organization) that has achieved better results and conducts a systematic study of the other organization's achievements and practices. The process then goes on to include the development and imple-

mentation of the strategies that will help the organization to improve performance. Benchmarking helps the organizations to learn exactly where their performance lags and focuses them on the application of the best practices (Letts et al. 1999, 1.)

Benchmarking is the most effective when organization or company utilizes it on a daily basis. The benefit of the benchmarking is that it brings to inside of the organization new information and that kind of information which would be lacking in changing an environment of the organization, especially when the actions of the organization have become routine. Therefore the own personnel of the organization is not the most sensitive and precise to evaluate objectively an effectiveness of their own actions (Niinikoski (toim.) 2005, 7 – 10.) It should be taken into account that the analyses of the benchmarking research and its framework for ideas and improvement proposals should be able to bring in the aspects and needs of the own organization. Benchmarking is not direct copying from others; instead the meaning of the benchmarking is to bring new improved functions and ideas which would fit into operational directions and the strategy of the organization. (Ross 2000, 260.)

4.4 Ensuring Credibility of Qualitative Research

It is hard to make sure that qualitative research is accurate or carried out properly. Therefore the following four aspects must to be taken under the consideration when carrying out qualitative research. These four aspects are credibility/trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These terms are used by to replace ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’, which are usually linked to quantitative research. (<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php>)

Credibility/trustworthiness

The credibility is involved in determining the results of the research in order to find out are they truthful. This is a classic example of ‘quality not quantity’. It depends more on the richness and accuracy of the information collected, rather than the amount of data collected. There are many techniques to estimate the accuracy of the findings, such as data triangulation, and triangulation through multiple analysts. In reality and in practice the participants/readers are the only ones who can reasonably judge the credibility of the results. (Shenton 2004, 63-72.)

Transferability

Transferability means to the degree in which the research can be removed to other contexts; this part is defined by readers of the research. The reader notices the specific details of the research situation and methods, and makes comparisons to the similar situations that they are more familiar with. If the specifics are comparable, the original research would be considered more credible. It is relevant that the original researcher supplies a highly detailed description of the research situation and methods of use. (Shenton 2004, 63-72.)

Dependability

Dependability confirms that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated. This is measured by the standard of which the research is carried out, analyzed and presented. Each process in the study should be described in detail to provide an external researcher to repeat the enquiry and reach similar results. This also provides researchers to understand the methods and their effectiveness. (Shenton 2004, 63-72.)

Confirmability

Confirmability points out how the research findings are supported by the data gathered. This is a process to find out whether the researcher has had partiality during the study. This is due to the assumption that qualitative research allows the research to bring a unique perspective to the study. An external researcher can condemn whether this is the case by observing the data gathered during the original enquiry. To improve the confirmability of the aboriginal conclusion, and audit imprint can be completed through the study to show how each decision was made. (Shenton 2004, 63-72.)

4.5 Conducting the Benchmarking Research

For my research I chose four different universities of applied sciences, which were located in different parts of Finland. The idea was to get an overview of alumni activities in different locations in Finland and seek their ways of managing the alumni activities. I was able to get interviews quite nicely from different schools and locations. The part of the selection process was first to find suitable universities. I started by looking for their websites and going through their services for the students.

I chose these four universities of applied sciences based on five different factors, so I used a purposive selection in a process. The first requirement was that an university of applied sciences actually had alumni activities as part of its student services. Secondly I needed to choose schools, which were offering English degree programmes in the bachelor level, and thirdly information to alumni activities were also given in English. Lastly I considered the universities based on their location and the amount of students. All these factors were looked into in selection process.

TABLE 1. Factors of selection process regarding alumni activity in different universities of applied sciences

Universities of Applied Sciences	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
Alumni activity is taking place at the University of Applied Sciences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English degree programmes in Bachelor level	Yes (11)	Yes (5)	Yes (3)	Yes (5)
Information about alumni activity is also offered in English	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The amount of students	16700	8000	6000	10000
The location of the universities	Metropolitan area	Central Finland	Northern Savonia	Southern Finland

All the interviews were conducted face to face, except one phone interview with alumni contact person at an university of applied sciences (C). All the contact persons of alumni activities were asked exactly the same twelve interview questions (Appendix 1). I also asked the same questions from the alumni contact person of Mamk in order to be able to compare the schools with each other and get ideas for my development recommendations. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish in order to make it smoother and more comfortable for the participants.

All the interviews were given in the campus areas of the universities of applied sciences. First I had searched information from the websites of the universities in order to find out who was responsible for the alumni activities of the school. Then I contact-

ed the alumni contact persons of the different universities by making phone calls. Some alumni contact persons were easier to reach out than others, because all the universities weren't offering information directly on their websites.

I was able to organize all the interviews in three weeks. I recorded all the three interviews which I was able to make face to face. I typed down the interview via phone during the interview. The interviews took approximately from 30 minutes to one hour depending on the university of applied sciences and of its alumni contact person, because all the alumni contact persons were asked the same interview questions (appendix 1). After the interviews I removed the interview from the recorder to my computer in order to transcribe it properly. I wrote approximately four to five pages of text from every interview regarding the alumni activities. I got a lot of information of other universities, and their ways of handling alumni activities. This helped me to make comparisons between them and offer fresh ideas and recommendations regarding international alumni activities in Mamk.

4.6 Quantitative Research

The Definition for quantitative research methods is the use of sampling techniques whose findings might be described numerically, and are yielding to numerical manipulation provide the researcher to measure future events or quantities.

(www.businessdictionary.com/definition/quantitative-research.html.) It targets research goals through empirical statements that engage numerical measurement and an analysis approach. Quantitative researchers direct a considerable amount of activity toward measuring a concept with scales that either directly or indirectly provides numeric values. The numeric values can then be used in statistical computations and hypothesis testing. In the end this process involves comparing numbers in some way. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 134-135.)

A quantitative research method was originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena. However, examples of quantitative methods are now well accepted in the social sciences and education including surveys, laboratory experiments, formal methods such as econometrics, and numerical methods such as mathematical modelling. (www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/Quantitative/quanthme.htm.)

4.7 Survey and Questionnaire

The objective of a survey is to gather primary data gathered and assembled specifically for the project at hand. Often research asks called respondents to entail answers or spoken questions. These interviews or questionnaires gather data through the mail, on the telephone, online, or face to face. Although a survey is defined as a method of gathering primary data based on communication with a representative sample of individuals. Surveys entail a figure at a given point in time. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 186-187.)

Surveys entail a quick, inexpensive, efficient, and accurate means of estimating information about a population. Over the last 50 years and specifically during the last two decades, survey research techniques and standards have become quite scientific and accurate. When properly carried out, surveys offer many benefits and advantages. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 186-187.)

A Questionnaire is also a great research method to investigate respondents, when one wants to know respondents' opinions and experiences of different matters. It is a common with questionnaires that questions are presented to respondents in a same way. Researcher defines when a respondent is able to answer freely, and when an answer is conducted by following structured forms. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2001, 172 - 181.)

Research by using questionnaires is empirical research and using questionnaire forms is one the most common quantitative research methods. Questionnaires are describing, and partly explaining. The describing questionnaire answers to questions such as what, who, what kind of or where. The explaining questionnaire aims to give answers to cause-and-effect relationships (Heikkilä 2008, 13 – 15.) Collected data of the questionnaires is primary data, because it is received immediately and it includes immediate information. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2001, 167 - 173).

The difficulty with the questionnaire is the common restrictive problem to quantitative research methods. Results give seldom the underlying cause of the matter; usually the questionnaire only tells the current situation of the research matter. Another problem of the surveys is that the respondents don't always answer truthfully to the questions. (Heikkilä 2008, 16 - 20.)

4.8 Three Criteria for Good Measurement

The three major criteria for evaluating measurements are reliability, validity, and sensitivity. Reliability is an indicator of a measure's internal consistency. Consistency is the key to understanding reliability. A measure is reliable when different attempts at measuring something converge on the same result. So, the concept of reliability revolves around consistency. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 305.)

Good measurements should be both consistent and accurate. Reliability represents how consistent a measure is, in that the different attempts at measuring the same thing converge on the same point. Accuracy deals more with how a measure assesses the intended concept. Validity is the accuracy of a measure or the extent to which a score truthfully represent a concept. Achieving validity is not a simple matter. The job performance measure should truly reflect job performance. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 307.)

The sensitivity of the scale is an important measurement concept, particularly when changes in attitudes or other hypothetical constructs are under investigation. Sensitivity refers to an instrument's ability to accurately measure variability in a concept. The sensitivity of a scale based on a single question or single item can also be increased by adding questions or items. In other words, because composite measures allow for a greater range of possible scores, they are more sensitive than single-item scale. Thus, sensitivity is generally increased by adding more response points or adding scale items. (Zikmund et al. 2010, 309.)

4.9 Conducting the Survey

I carried out quantitative research by using Webropol as a tool and by creating survey regarding the international alumni activities in Mamk to students, who will be potential alumni members when their graduate. By this way I got information on perspectives of students regarding the international alumni activities of Mamk. I think that this was an effective way to get ideas and truthful information of the students' current expectations and wishes toward alumni activity. The results were measured by using Likert scale. According to Zikmund et al. (2010, 320), Likert scale is a measure of attitudes designed to allow respondents to rate how strongly they agree or disagree

with carefully constructed statements, ranging from very positive to very negative attitudes toward some object.

I sought information on students' expectations and their wishes towards the alumni activity. In this case I aimed to get the research to offer me some point of view to my development recommendations. I think that by using two different research methods, I got the most objective and accurate picture of the current situation of the alumni activities. I definitely got some ideas how to improve the international alumni activities in Business Management degree program level, and how to make the international alumni activities more appealing for the present students in order to encourage them to join in activities, when graduated.

I carried out the survey for the present second and third year English degree programme students of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. These degree programmes are International Business, Environmental Engineering, and Information Technology. I used Webropol as a research tool in order to get data about their opinions and interests regarding alumni activities. I hoped to obtain data about the wishes concerning alumni activities, what is the value that they are looking for in alumni activities, and if they had any development ideas for the activities.

I collected all the data by using paper questionnaire forms. In order to reach wider range of students I visited their lectures and went to their classrooms to carry out the survey. Afterwards I transferred all the data to the Webropol and used it as an analyzing tool. Webropol provided me with a basic report, but I still needed frequency tables and cross tables of certain results, so I used Statistical package for social sciences (herein after SPSS) in order to make the analysis. With the help of SPSS programme I was able to get a good overview of the respondents and the data

Collecting the answers of the respondents took more time and effort than I expected, since it was harder to reach some groups than others. For example, from the Environmental Engineering group I got only few respondents. They were mostly first-year students, which was disappointing, because the questionnaire was targeted to the second and third-year students. Anyway I was able to get 70 respondents in total, which means that at least Business Management and Information Technology groups were well represented.

5 RESULTS

In this chapter I will first present the results of the benchmarking research. Then after the benchmarking part the results of the survey will be discussed.

5.1 Benchmarking Research Results

I had twelve different questions regarding the alumni activities (Appendix 1), and every university of applied sciences had a little bit different strategy and style how to handle things and run its alumni activities. I will process every question separately in order to get a better picture of the results and the differences of the universities of applied sciences. The results are assembled from the interviews with the alumni contact persons.

How is alumni activity carried out?

I found some common and uncommon factors regarding the alumni activities of the different universities of applied sciences in my benchmarking research. The first difference was that universities either had or did not have an alumni association. Usually universities, which had an alumni association, had divided managing of alumni activities between university and an alumni association. The second difference was that all the universities didn't have an employee, who was mainly responsible for alumni activities; most of the alumni contact persons had other responsibilities too. A common factor for all of the universities was that the every degree programme had their own contact persons who were helping by organizing events and other program for its alumni.

TABLE 2. Managing alumni activities in different universities of applied sciences?

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
How is alumni activity carried out?	University has an alumni association and school is organizing its alumni activities together with an association.	Alumni activities are divided between different degree programmes. There had been chosen people who are responsible for activities. School aims to have entrepreneurial approach with alumni activities. School doesn't have an alumni association.	Most of the alumni events are organized in the degree programme level. University doesn't have an alumni association.	University has had an alumni association since 2006. Student body also coordinates alumni activities. University has an alumni register with an alumni association. The alumni activity also takes place in the degree programme level.

Alumni activities of university of applied sciences (A) were divided between an alumni association and the university. The alumni association got funding from the university and the executive manager of the alumni activities worked for both parties 50% of her time. The Alumni activities have organized different kinds of smaller events also such as cultural events, educational events, and social events. These events take place usually twice a year. Most of the events are held in Finnish, although the school has many international students. The university of applied sciences (B) had a different point of view for the question and it doesn't have an alumni association. Most of the alumni activities are organized for every degree programmes more or less separately, if there are bigger events they are held in the university level. It aims to have an entrepreneurial approach with its practices and these aspects come also up in alumni activities. Most of the events are held in Finnish. The university of applied sciences (C) has quite similar point of view with the university (B) when considering alumni events, and it doesn't have an alumni association either. The university (C) offers the alumni events in the degree programme level and intends to offer events, which are interesting to alumni in their own expertise area. So far it hasn't organized events in English. Lastly the university of applied sciences (D) has also an alumni association and the graduated students are responsible for the alumni operations. The university (D) and alumni association have a shared alumni register, which is different when compared to the university (A), because school does not have its own alumni registers. The alumni

association is responsible for social events and the university is organizing mostly the educational events. Bigger events are organized every second or third year, but smaller degree programme level events are held every year or more often. Most of the events are held in Finnish.

What kind of activities are current alumni seeking?

All the universities had common answers considering this (interview) question. The alumni contact persons told me that their alumni are interested in their own expertise areas. In other words professional events which were meant to the own degree programmes of alumni were found interesting. Social events were also listed to be popular in many cases.

TABLE 3. Interests of the present alumni regarding events of the activity

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
What kind of activities are current alumni seeking?	Alumni of university (A) like activities which are meant to degree programmes	Alumni are interested in activities which are regarding their own expertise.	Alumni are interested in their expertise areas, work life collaboration with others and different kinds of mentoring experiences	Alumni are interested in social events and their expertise areas.

In the university of applied sciences (A) most of the wishes were concerning work life skills and expertise. The alumni would also like to have more the degree programme level meetings and events were hoped to be more systematic in order to be better informed becoming events of an alumni association. The university of applied sciences (B) had received similar wishes. The alumni would like to have lectures concerning their own expertise areas and also connections in work life zone. The university of applied sciences (C) told that the alumni are interested in continuing their education, also work life connections and experiences were interesting to them. The university of applied sciences (D) named that social events are very welcomed by the alumni and they like to meet their former peers and teachers. They are also interested in self-development, networking, and work life connections.

How are your alumni relations managed?

A common factor for all the universities of applied sciences was that all of them offer information about the activities and its current operations in the websites of the schools. Some universities had also a newsletter for its alumni. Those universities who had alumni association communicated with the alumni regularly via email. The biggest differences between universities were how they were utilizing social media. Some universities of applied sciences did not have their own Facebook sites, which were directly targeted to the alumni activities, and all of them did not have that wide range of social media tools as other schools.

TABLE 4. How universities of applied sciences manage their alumni relations?

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
How are your alumni relations managed?	An alumni association has alumni register and they use social media, as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest, and websites of school.	Has its own websites for alumni activities and they also use school's Facebook sites.	Uses an online newsletter which is sent twice a year to their alumni> (in English in 2014) University has an alumni register and the alumni receive emails from the school.	Has an online newsletter, which is sent twice a year. An alumni association sends mail once a month. The degree programmes have their own alumni contact persons.

University of applied sciences (A) has a wide range of social media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest by which it is connected with its alumni. A communication channels are under the development in order to reach the alumni better. It is also using the websites of the school when it gives information for its alumni. The university of applied sciences (B) has its own Facebook site for the whole school, where the alumni can receive information. The school uses its websites in order to give information to its alumni. Every degree programme has their own personnel who are responsible for alumni activities and they offer information to the alumni too. The university of applied sciences (C) informs its alumni with an online newsletter which is sent twice a year. This newsletter should be in English in 2014. The school has its own alumni register and all the graduated students can take part in activities. The university of applied sciences (D) sends an online newsletter to its alumni twice a year and an alumni association sends emails to the alumni once a month. The degree pro-

grammes have their own heads of education who are having their own connections with the graduates.

What kind of goal does your school have for your alumni collaboration?

A common factor for all the universities of applied sciences was that they listed their goals as to build up networks with work life and its connections. Work life connections and approaching its aspects were felt to be very important. Differences were found in the goals regarding the alumni activities, because every university has a little bit different understanding and approach concerning the activities itself.

TABLE 5. Goals of the universities of applied sciences regarding alumni collaboration

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
What kind of goals does your school have for your alumni collaboration?	University should have more clear goals regarding alumni relations. Other important things are collaboration with work life	University wants to make sure that its alumni are able to get employment with their education. Alumni activity is a way to find training places for students and topics for theses. Networking, partnership work, and feedback from alumni are important.	University has goals regarding partnership activities, networking; also work life substances are important to school.	Stabilize the concept of alumni activity and get work life connections. Work life contacts and collaboration are important.

The university of applied sciences (A) aims to create the framework for alumni relations regarding the goals of the activities. The university also would like to improve its work life connections, work life collaboration, and to find mutual benefits for the school and its alumni. The alumni are a good source of feedback of the degree programmes and their educational value for the work life. When regarding the goals of the alumni activities in the university of applied sciences (B), the employment figures are one of them. The university tries to find training places for its students and get topics for theses. Networking and partnership activities are also important for the school. The university of applied sciences (C) tries to network with its alumni and carry out partnership activities. Substances of work life are important for the school.

The alumni are a good source of feedback and give current information of work life situations. The university of applied sciences (D) aims to stabilize the concept of its alumni activities. The university does not have any measurable goals for the activities. The important factors to the alumni activities of the university are work life connections, work life networks, and the current feedback from work life situations and educational level of the degree programmes in order to utilize information in education.

How are alumni activities organized?

The Common factors for the universities of applied sciences are in this case that every degree programme has its own personnel who are responsible for the alumni activities in their degree programmes. In the degree programme level teachers and other personnel just take part in organizing events, when managing the bigger picture of the alumni activities are left for the alumni contact persons and the other named personnel. The universities of applied sciences have the different kinds of resources for the alumni activities, because some schools have an alumni associations and some act on their own. Some universities do not have as wide human resources to offer to the activities as some others do.

TABLE 6. Universities of applied sciences and their ways of organizing alumni activity.

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
How are alumni activities organized?	The alumni coordinator and the alumni executive manager are responsible and executive manager works 50% for alumni association. Teachers of degree programmes are also involved.	Every degree programme has its own person who is responsible for alumni activities. Bigger events are arranged together.	The coordinating study director is responsible with the head of communications.	The alumni coordinator is contact person and an alumni association organizes its own activities. The heads of education organize events in the degree programme level.

In the university of applied sciences (A) the alumni coordinator is responsible for alumni activities. The executive manager of alumni activities works for 50/50 the school and the alumni association. The teachers of the degree programmes are also involved and they are helping with the operations of the alumni activities. The univer-

sity of applied sciences (B) has several persons who are responsible for alumni activities. Every degree programme has its own alumni coordinator and these people cooperate with each other and the entire university level events are arranged together. The university of applied sciences (C) doesn't have an alumni association. It has named a few persons who are responsible for the activities. The coordinating study director and the head of communications run operations of the alumni activities. The university of applied sciences (D) has a contact person who is the alumni coordinator. The alumni association runs its own operations. Every degree programme has also its own head of education who is responsible for alumni activities. They take part in its activities and help organize them. Marketing activities are handled together and both parties are updating the websites of the alumni activities.

Did alumni activities take place first in Finnish or were activities developed also in English along the Finnish side?

A common factor for all the universities was that public relations were handled almost immediately in both languages, in Finnish and in English. On the other hand nowadays some universities are putting more effort on the communication in English than others, although all of the alumni contact persons admitted that the English side of alumni activity is in need of development. Especially those universities of applied sciences, which had an alumni association, were thinking both more international approaches, because the communication and operations of the alumni associations are more or less in Finnish.

TABLE 7. Development path of the alumni activities

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
Did alumni activities take place first in Finnish or were activities developed also in English along the Finnish side?	Alumni association has used Finnish from the beginning, but university has used English and Finnish in its alumni relation from the beginning	Public relations have been in both languages from the beginning.	Alumni activities were first only in Finnish, but public relations were handled in English at a very early stage.	First activity took place only in Finnish, but nowadays information is given also in English. Alumni association operates in Finnish, but university uses both languages.

Are alumni activities as developed in English as in Finnish?

A common factor in this question was that English part of the alumni activities are not as developed as the Finnish parts. Especially contact persons assigned that in event level, there are a lot more happening in Finnish than in English. On the other hand the other common factor was that all the universities were working on improving of the communication in English. There weren't any big differences between universities of applied sciences considering the development level of English side of the alumni activities, although every university had their own problems and wishes regarding bilingual aspects of activities.

TABLE 8. Development level of the alumni activities considering bilingual aspects

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
Are alumni activities as developed in English as in Finnish?	Alumni activity is not as develop in English	Information of events is given in English, but events are mostly in Finnish	Is not as developed yet. A newsletter will be available in English in 2014	Most of the events are in Finnish, but information is also given in English.

Are there differences between degree programmes regarding alumni activities?

This question regarding the activities of the degree programmes when joining in alumni activities disclosed that there were quite many differences. Almost every university had a little bit different answers considering this question. Some universities said that their most active degree programmes were engineers or business students. On the other hand, in one university nursing students who became alumni were quite active. These were the answers in Finnish side. In English side the universities of applied sciences mostly listed that they didn't have information or simply big differences regarding English degree programmes. Two universities said that international business students were the most active.

TABLE 9. Differences between degree programmes regarding the alumni activities

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
Are there differences between degree programmes regarding alumni activities? (Finnish degree programmes)	Most of the alumni are engineers and nursing students.	No information	Most of the alumni are engineers and International Business students	Business student are the most active. Vocational teacher education side has started to be active too.
Are there differences between degree programmes, which are offered in English regarding alumni activities?	There might be differences, but they are not as big as in Finnish degree programmes	No information	International Business students are most active	International Business students are the most active

How many (approx.) new alumni members join in the activities every year?

Universities revealed that they had some differences regarding the figures of the alumni activities. One university gets approximately 30 new alumni members every year, when one university received 70 new alumni last year. On the other hand, two of the alumni contact persons didn't have to give any accurate information considering the question.

TABLE 10. Figures of alumni, who join in the activity

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
How many new alumni members join in the activities every year?	Alumni association gets 30 new alumni every year, but many people are interested in join (30% of graduates) There is a fee of 15€ to join the association	University contacts all its alumni, but no information about the currently joined alumni members.	University has approximately 1000 alumni and in this year they received 70 new alumni	No information

In the university of applied sciences (A), alumni association has approximately 900 members and approximately 30 persons join the activities every year. According to Executive Manager of the alumni activities 40% of the graduate students answered questionnaires of school and 30% of them would be interested in alumni activity. The alumni contact person of the university of applied sciences (B) didn't have information of figures of the alumni activities. The school usually contacts with every graduated student. The university of applied sciences (C) has approximately 1000 alumni members and this year they received 70 members more. The contact person of the alumni activities in university of applied sciences (D) didn't have information of the figures of the alumni activities.

What kind of development work are you doing regarding alumni activities?

A common factors for the universities of applied sciences were that all the universities wanted to improve their communication with alumni. Some universities were more focused on improving the concept of alumni activity than other, while one university was more focused for instance on the international aspects of the activities. Two universities were also interested in developing their internal marketing. Some universities also hoped to get more human resources for the activities.

TABLE 11. Development work of the universities of applied sciences regarding the alumni activities

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
What kind of development work are you doing regarding the alumni activities?	University should have official guidelines of alumni relations and also its own alumni register. Internal marketing should be more effective and school should get more resources to develop alumni activities (alumni coordinator who works for the school 100%)	University wants to be the most entrepreneurial university of applied sciences. Therefore alumni activities are influenced by entrepreneurship. The school wants to make its information flow more effective and get their alumni to notice the benefits of the activities.	At the moment University is focused on developing the newsletter which will be in English next year.	Marketing should be more effective and the concept of alumni activities should be clearer to alumni. Internal communications should be more effective too in order to get all degree programme level events into the alumni activity.

The university of applied sciences (A) aims to create official guidelines for alumni relations and its activities. It also wants to start its own alumni register and the school should have its own alumni coordinator, who will work for the Metropolia full-time. The goals and criteria of the alumni activities should be clearer to everybody. The university intends to activate its alumni and make its internal marketing to be more effective. The university of applied sciences (B) has started its development work regarding the alumni activities by following the strategy of the school, which is to focus on the entrepreneurial aspects of the university. Therefore the development works of the alumni activities are emphasizing entrepreneurial factors and aspects. The university aims to get its marketing and the public relations of the alumni activities more systematic and wants to network and co-operate more effectively together with work life connections. The university of applied sciences (C) is mostly focused on the newsletter of the alumni activities, because it will be printed in English in 2014. The university of applied sciences (D) intends to make its marketing more effective and the concept of the alumni activities should be clearer to the present alumni in order to find the value of the activity for themselves. The internal marketing of the alumni activities should be carried out more effectively and the degree programmes could operate better regarding the activities and their events.

How do you see the future of the alumni activities?

A common factor for all the universities of applied sciences was that all of them saw the future of the alumni activities to be more international. Universities of applied sciences also mentioned that work life connections will be even more important in the future. Some factors considering the concept of the activity in the future had a little bit different point of views, but mostly universities of applied sciences wanted that alumni activities would get a better foothold in the activities of the school.

TABLE 12. The future prospects of the alumni activities in different universities of applied sciences

Question	University of Applied Sciences (A)	University of Applied Sciences (B)	University of Applied Sciences (C)	University of Applied Sciences (D)
How do you see the future of the alumni activities at your university of Applied Sciences?	University will have clear guidelines for alumni relations and alumni would see alumni activities more appealing and useful on their point of view. It would be more international.	Alumni activities would have even more work life connections. Alumni activities would have also more expert lectures to their alumni. Alumni activities could be more international, if necessary.	Student association could take part more actively in alumni activities and the school could have its own alumni association.	Collaboration with work life and their connections will be even more important. Alumni activities should be better noticed and part of everyday activities of the school. Alumni activities could be more international.

The university of applied sciences (A) will have a clearer model of the alumni relations management in order to get the alumni activities more approachable and attractive to alumni. The goals of the alumni should be combined with the goals of the university. In the future alumni activities would be more international and the goal of the school is to find global perspectives for the alumni activities. In the next three years the university should be able to get the concept for the alumni activities in order to get a clearer operating model for its activities. The university of applied sciences (B) wants to move forward with entrepreneurship aspects. Alumni activity aims to get mentors for startup student companies and entrepreneurial innovation projects. Training processes would be an important activity for the students in order to get collaboration between them and alumni. The university aims to activate the alumni more and the activity could be also more international in the future. University of applied sciences (C) intends to get the student body to take more actively part in the alumni activities and its operations. The university could also have an alumni association. In the future the alumni activities could emphasize on more a lifetime long collaboration with its alumni. The university of applied sciences (D) wants to get the alumni activities to have even more collaboration with work life connections. English degree programmes should take more actively part in the activities. Budgeting will be more centralized for the degree programme level events and the alumni association will also be a part of this process. Networking abroad will be started and will be focused on countries.

5.2 Results of the survey

The background information part of the survey (Appendix 2) revealed that respondents were from 18 to 28 years old, mostly second or third-year students, and mostly from Business Management and Information Technology degree programmes. These degree programmes were almost equally represented. (Frequency tables are in (Appendix 2) The most of the respondents (almost 60%) were Russians. Most of the respondent (43%) had lived in Finland from one to two years already or less than one year (26%). Other answers were from three to four years or longer were divided between the rests of the respondents without significant differences.

The last background question was about their intentions regarding living in Finland after studies and most of the answers were divided between probably yes (39%) and I don't know (27%) options. A significant factor was that almost half of the respondents had positive attitude towards living in Finland after the studies. I researched, if there were differences between males and females and their willingness to live in Finland afterwards. The results revealed that the males were more eager to live in Finland after the studies. 55, 5 % of the male respondents had positive attitude towards it, while 41, 2 % the female respondents had a positive attitude towards the question. There is 14, 3 % difference, even though the amount of the genders were almost same; 36 of the respondents were male, and 34 of them were female. Cross tables are in (Appendix 2)

After that section there were questions concerning international alumni activities. Most of the students were not aware of the alumni activities (91%). The rest, who were aware of the activity, told that they got the information through Mamk websites, by seeing posters on the wall regarding the activities, and one student got the information from a tutor.

Questions nine and ten, which considered the information sources of the alumni activities before and after the graduation got the following answers. Before graduation most of the students (71%) preferred email, the next popular was information from your teachers (67%), and the third option was the websites of Mamk (63%). These three information sources were the most preferred information sources of the alumni activities before graduation.

Three most important information sources after graduation changed a little bit compared to before the graduation. Most answers were email (78%), the second popular was Facebook (68%), and the third option preferred the websites of Mamk (54%). Some students proposed to gain information before the graduation by the following information boards of the school, and after the graduation by getting information regarding the international alumni activities by reading other websites. Considering the information flow the question 12 disclosed that most of the respondents (87%) would like to gain information in English and rest of the students (13%) in Finnish. Almost all foreign students wanted to have information in English.

Question 13 considered the students' interests regarding alumni activities after their graduation. The table 13 shows that students were most interested in getting information of working life and postgraduate studies. Social events and educational events were also listed interesting in students' points of view. Less interesting activities were mentoring, acting as a quest lecturer, and event organizing together with Mamk. On the other hand many respondents were still uncertain about these three questions. For example 46% were still uncertain about the question considering event organizing, when fifth of the respondents showed a positive attitude toward organizing activities.

TABLE 13. Results of Question 13 regarding students' interests in alumni activities after the graduation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Networking	1,5%	7,4%	47,1%	36,8%	7,4%	100,0%
Mentor activities	8,8%	30,9%	36,8%	22,1%	1,5%	100,0%
Educational events	1,4%	10,1%	24,6%	53,6%	10,1%	100,0%
Social events	1,5%	9,0%	31,3%	40,3%	17,9%	100,0%
Information on postgraduate studies	1,5%	7,4%	19,1%	50,0%	22,1%	100,0%
Information on working life	0,0%	2,9%	5,8%	47,8%	43,5%	100,0%
Quest lecturer	7,4%	20,6%	36,8%	23,5%	11,8%	100,0%
Organizing events together with Mamk	7,4%	23,5%	45,6%	20,6%	2,9%	100,0%

I researched also differences between study programmes and their interests in question 13. (Cross tables are in appendix 2) There were some slight differences between study

programmes, even though I mostly compared the Business Management (study programme) and Information Technology programmes, because the amount of the respondents (4 respondents) from Environmental Engineering group was not sufficient for essential differences. The most remarkable difference I was able to find, when I compared educational and social events between Business Management and Information Technology degree programmes. The respondents from Information Technology degree programme were more interested in educational events than Business Management students. 70 % of Information Technology degree programme respondents had positive attitude towards educational events, when 54, 5 % of the respondents of Business Management programme had a positive attitude towards educational events. In social events it was other way around, the respondents from Business Management degree programme had more positive attitude towards social events (69,7% of respondents) and from Information Technology degree programme the respondents disclosed that 46, 4% had a positive attitude towards social events. Other remarkable difference was that Business Management students were 13 % more eager to receive information on postgraduate studies than Information Technology students. All the other questions in question 13 did not disclose any essential differences between the study programmes.

The next question was about the alumni events and students were asked to choose two most preferred types of events. Most of the respondents (71%) were interested in participating in professional events and in educational events (43%). Approximately 5,7% were not willing to participate in any alumni events. Most of the respondents were willing to participate once a year (54%) or more often than once a year (25%). Every other year (10%) and less than every other year (5, 8%) were not popular options between the respondents. Only 5, 8% percent was not willing to participate at all. A place for the alumni events was also the topic question in a survey. Mikkeli was most popular with 71%, and Helsinki the next popular (40%). Other countries which were requested were Russia, China, The United States, New Zealand, and The Netherlands.

Question 17 was about the students' interests regarding hearing the present alumni during the classes and 81% of the respondents were willing to hear from about alumni's experiences, studies and careers during their classes. There were no significant differences between study programmes how they responded to the question. Most of

the respondents were interested in hearing about their career paths, work life experiences and their professional lives after the graduation. Foreign students were interested in hearing how other international alumni have found jobs in Finland, and how challenging it has been. The respondents were also interested in hearing about the alumni's opinions about education and its responsiveness to the real life jobs. Some respondents wished to have information regarding practical training places and some of the respondents were interested in hearing any general information what alumni were ready to tell and share with them.

The Question 19 about the students' wishes or suggestions regarding international alumni activities revealed that most of the respondents simply were looking for information about alumni activities itself or they hoped to have more international aspects behind it. Some respondents wished for example that events would be held in different cities and countries.

The last question was about joining in the alumni activity. 73% of the respondents were willing to join the activities when they graduate. The rest of the respondents who said no listed the following reasons: as lack of time; they were exchange students; they did not know enough about the activity; they were not interested in activity or did not know what to decide yet. There were some differences in figures when comparing the study programmes and their responses to the question. For example Information Technology students were 30, 1% more eager to join the alumni activities than Business Management students. On the other hand, there were some exchange students in Business Management groups, so the results do not necessarily tell the whole truth about the situation. Cross tables are in (Appendix 2)

6 CONCLUSIONS

Mamk has several development areas regarding the alumni activities, such as international alumni activities and its services. Mamk has not been able to reach that many international alumni members and there are several potential international alumni who are possible candidates to be registered at as alumni. It is very important that Mamk is able to get connected with them. In other words communication with the international alumni should be more effective. Overall the alumni activities should be stabilized as

a concept in order to explain it to the current students and the current alumni. Therefore it would also be crucial that the internal marketing of the alumni activities and possibilities of the alumni activities are utilized properly. The alumni activities should be part of the life of the university of applied sciences in everyday basis and by this way it would become more familiar to everybody. I am going to start my development suggestions by offering recommendations for international alumni activities. Secondly, I will also present the case of Business Management degree programme regarding improvements of the international alumni activities. Thirdly, I will discuss the reliability of the research.

6.1 Recommendations for International Alumni Activities

Mamk could approach the international alumni activities with an effective service development concept by creating more suitable strategy for the activity. The Alumni activities should be presented to be more part of the school's everyday activities, and be more approachable to students and alumni by this way. Mamk could start to develop the international alumni activities by some specific focused actions. For example, first in Mamk should be able to stabilize the concept of the international alumni activities. As to speak of Zeithaml & Bitner (2003, 227.) when they discussed about the types of new services that will be appropriate will depend on the organization's goals, vision, capabilities, and growth plans. By defining a new service strategy (possibly in terms of markets, types of services, time horizon for development, profit criteria, or other relevant factors), the organization will be in a better position to begin generating specific ideas. By opening and offering more effective and clear concept of alumni activities is the key for the success. Universities of applied sciences should open up their teaching and project planning work, and also be ready to present half-created ideas to alumni and work life networks in order to develop them together. According to Hohenthal, et al. (2012, 20-29) this requires changing of the thinking process and tolerating uncertainty. In this case uncertainty factors include sharing expert knowhow, and even questioning it with work life. The results of my survey revealed that 91% of the respondents were not aware of the alumni network at Mamk. The huge amount of the students shows definitely that this is one of the most important improving aspects of the international alumni activities. How can we get alumni involved with the activities, if they don't know what it means or what it offers?

Awareness of the international alumni activities would get the students and the alumni easier involved with the alumni activities and they would be more willing to participate in its activities. For example Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004, 16) discussed that the value creation process centers on individuals and their co-creation experiences. Edwarsson, et al. (2006, v.) concluded also that the interaction between consumers and firms becomes the new locus of the co-creation of value. New service concepts and service offerings are also developed together with customers. Customer involvement refers to becoming close with customers in order to learn from and with them. This will be definitely the way how to start development work with the international alumni activities by engaging students and the present alumni to the process. The results of my research disclosed that fifth of the students would be interested in organizing alumni events together with Mamk. Even though 45, 5 % of respondents were still uncertain of their willingness to participate in an event organization process, on the other hand this is a big potential group, which Mamk can still involve to work with the school. To speak of according to Hipp & Herstatt (2006, 269) because of the interactive nature of services, it has become more important that services are co-developed by the producer and the intended user or customer.

An internal marketing of the alumni activities should be more effective so that students would get better a picture of the activities. The results of my survey for example revealed that when the student selected three the most important channels of communication for the international alumni activities before their graduation, 67% of the respondents were eager to get information from their teachers regarding the alumni activities. Other important channels in both cases before and after graduation were Facebook, email and websites of Mamk. After graduation 78% of the respondents were willing to receive information via email and 68% by using Facebook. These were listed also important information channels before graduation; the websites of Mamk were also popular information source before the graduation (63%) and after the graduation (54%) of the respondents. This proves that Mamk should utilize its websites in delivering information of the international alumni activities. The websites are already offering information in English regarding the international alumni activities, but Mamk must update information regularly also in English. For example the results disclosed that 87% of the respondents wanted to receive information regarding the inter-

national alumni activities in English. Therefore the schools should offer the newsletter to the international alumni also in English, because now it is mostly in Finnish.

According to Kowalik (2011, 21) social media is a powerful tool for school to inform its alumni and present students (potential alumni) about its activities. Therefore social media should be utilized properly and effectively; although the benefits of utilizing social media are plentiful, alumni offices, with limited human and financial resources, can now reach a growing number of graduates. Koskela, et al. (2007, 27) told that network can be activated with the help of interaction, and it can function as a source of information, group of experts or in a social support. Adding information to a social network is an inexpensive way to alert thousands of people about alumni events or graduates' achievements. Social media is particularly effective in engaging younger alumni who are not responding to traditional marketing campaigns. Students seem to find social media sites such as Facebook a very effective way to receive and seek information. Mamk has a Facebook site for alumni activities but it should take into account its international alumni, which are willing to get information in English. Therefore Mamk should make sure that information is given also in English, especially when events and other facts are regarding the international alumni. Social media is also a creative way to engage alumni and an effective way to reach out and offer information for everybody.

Mamk could also utilize some other social networking sites besides Facebook. For example LinkedIn was an important information channel for 19% of the respondents after the graduation. Some other universities of applied sciences got also results by utilizing other social media tools as Pinterest for example. Alumni are using these SNS whether the university they attended uses them or not, and they connect with other alumni from the same community. According to Makrez (2011, 232-233) allowing alumni to become part in the university can take place through SNS. In addition to emailing, which is not comprehensive solution, social media channels give another interactive way to promote events, solicit feedback and share news. At the end of the day, active alumni are contributing alumni. Alumni offices are continually searching for new ways to keep alumni engaged. Even if they are not physically attending events on campuses, engaging them in this brand community allows the university to develop a broader base of those who have vested interest in the success of enterprise. This could be a way for Mamk to get alumni to be more interactive with the university and the activities through social media and social networking sites.

Even though there is not employee assigned only for the alumni activities, social media and social networking sites offer Mamk new innovative and creative ways to reach their alumni and students. It is important that the school will be open for new ideas and ready to try something different. McEwan (2011, 20) also discussed that social networking sites operate as an extension of the type of internet communication. As such, they provide new ways for the students to connect and new challenges for the students' social engagement. The impact of the experimental uses of SNS within the context of a diverse alumni community, which connects seamlessly to emerging campus wide initiatives, is a complex and exciting realm to participate in.

Makrez (2011, 237-238) mentioned that it is always challenging to think out of the box when it comes to finding an answer that suits their specific institutional goals. It will hopefully inspire a creative, fun, innovative, and interactive flow of ideas, along with the courage to try new things. Using Facebook to link to a YouTube channel to showcase a new alumni business or student accomplishment is a great way to increase viewer activity and hopefully evoke some emotion or response. Advertising events on these SNS through event pages or RSS feed technologies is an effective, quick, low-cost marketing mechanism to reach a broad audience of alumni, whether it is a quest speaker, a commencement reception or a sporting event. SNS enable the alumni office a hand-on tool to inform their alumni community. The International alumni activities can utilize social media also in marketing operations, which will be a more effective and more inexpensive way for Mamk to reach out the students and offer information. Especially Mamk should utilize social media, when international alumni events are taking place. This is an effective way to reach everybody and offer information about coming events and their nature, and network with each other. The results showed that at least 44% of the respondents would be willing to network with other Mamk alumni, (when they will be alumni) after the graduation. The goals of Mamk are also considering the networking with alumni and their work life connections

It would be also easier to find out through social media what kind of alumni events students and present alumni are interested in. The results of my survey revealed that professional events (71%) and educational events (43%) were found to be most interesting out of five other options when the respondents were asked to pick two most suitable options for them. 54% of the respondents were also interested in participating

in alumni events once a year and 25% of the respondents more often than once a year. Mamk aims to organize bigger alumni events for everybody every third year and these events have received good feedback afterwards. In the degree programme level events are held more regularly, which is good because the respondents of my survey were clearly interested in participating more often than every other or every third year.

We have to take into account that it is quite impossible for the school to organize bigger alumni events in every year because of the budget. Some alumni however would have been ready to pay for the last bigger event which was organized for every alumni of Mamk. For example Mamk could utilize its alumni association when events are organized, at least partly, because association was established in 2008, but it has never worked in practice. In some universities of applied sciences alumni associations organize mostly social events and these associations work together with the school. I do not suggest that Mamk should use as high an involvement level as in other schools with alumni associations, because it has not worked in the past, but maybe Mamk could find some way to utilize the alumni association in order to develop the international alumni activities and its networks. It is just the fact that usually alumni know best each other from their degree programmes and involving alumni in this would be highly beneficial for both of parties, the school and the alumni.

Mamk could try to attract its international alumni by organizing events also somewhere else than in Mikkeli. The results of my survey showed that 40% of the respondents would be willing to participate in the international alumni events in Helsinki or in somewhere else in Finland (17%). Even though Mikkeli got most “votes” (71%) Mamk could think about this option and maybe organize some events in Helsinki in the future. It seems to be the easiest meeting point for most foreigners if they are going to stay in Finland. For example the second and third year international students revealed that 39 % of the respondents will probably live in Finland after their studies and 10% of the respondents will definitely live in Finland afterwards. There seems to be a potential group of alumni to be reached inside of the Finland. Mamk could start to think about the idea that perhaps international alumni events could be organized together with entrance exams. Especially St. Petersburg would be a good option because of its location. Mamk gets most of its international students from Russia. Mamk has also strategic point of view with this; the cooperation with Russia is one of area of the focus. Students would be informed of the international alumni activities already in

early stage of their studying. Probably it would be easier to involve and engage them with activities by this way too. After this alumni could be more eager to be inspired of the activities and find out the value of it.

It is important to Mamk that it could inspire and attract students and its alumni. (Henthall et al. (2012, 20-29) discussed the importance of the inspiring; this comes after engaging alumni and happens quite naturally afterwards. On the other hand inspiring requires some effort in order to maintain and create it. For example, organized lectures and seminars might act as a source of inspiration. These events might create new contents and thinking with fresh ideas, which also can be reflected to alumni's own careers. Alumni are also very interested in becoming involved with the other end of the continuum, career services – the institutional output. Alumni of many ages are interested in the activities related to careers from networking to simply learning about what alumni have done in their careers.

The results disclosed that the present students (81%) would be interested in hearing about experiences of their studies and careers of the alumni during their classes. Most of the respondents were interested in hearing about the career paths of the alumni and about their work itself, and also job and training opportunities were found interesting. Many international students were interested in getting information about finding a job in Finland as a foreigner, and how hard this will be. Mentoring is also one way to involve present alumni. As mentioned previously, many alumni like to talk about their jobs and give information for becoming alumni. The results showed that 24% of the respondents would be interested in mentoring when becoming alumni. According to Clouse Dolbert (2002, 4.) the trend is to engage alumni in activities that fit best with where they are in their life cycles. Alumni should be informed and comfortable with what they are asked to do. Alumni activities need to identify a staff member to be responsible for managing the program that recruits, retains, and recognizes volunteers.

Alam (2006, 15) thought that customer interaction has been advocated as a potentially powerful tool for developing successful new services. Specifically, it is seen as an effective tool to jump-start the idea generation process for new services, to create value for customers, and to effectively manage the overall innovation process in a firm. Gummesson (2006, 82) mentioned that with customer interaction, it is possible to develop a differentiated new service with unique benefits and better value for the cus-

tomers. It is a key issue because today's customers are more sophisticated and demanding, and search for superior value in a new service.

In other words, Mamk has to take into account that alumni want to have clear benefits out of activities and they are ready to work together with Mamk in order to maintain them and develop the international alumni activities. For example, the results revealed that the respondents' wishes and suggestions regarding international alumni activity were mostly related to the international aspects of the alumni activities and overall information about the alumni activities itself. Mamk could also get more attention via alumni activities, because alumni are also marketing the school with their skills and knowledge. This is crucial for the marketing of Mamk too. For example, according to Hohenthal et al. (2012, 20-29) alumni are also acting as "business cards" of the school. They are the living proof about the education and its level. At universities alumni have had remarkable role as fundraisers. Perhaps this is a way for universities of applied sciences in order to improve the alumni activities and its activities in the future too, because usually schools don't have that big a budget for the alumni activities and fundraising from alumni is seldom the option in Finland.

Other recommendations for the international alumni activities are to make alumni activities appear as convenient as possible. For example, Mamk has done already some changes in order to make joining the activities as easy as possible. Mamk has created a way to register as alumni at the same time, when students are applying graduation in Asia. This gave good results for the alumni activities. Last year school got 200-300 new alumni for their alumni register, which is 1/3 of the graduated students. The results also disclosed that 73% of the respondents were willing to join the alumni activities when they graduate. The rest of the students, who were not willing to join in, gave reasons for it as they did not know yet, they did not have enough information about it, they had a lot of other activities, they were not interested, or they were exchange students.

In other words Mamk has to start to market more actively alumni activities to the current students, even though they are not directly "the customers" of the alumni activities, but they will be very soon. Co-creating value together with the current alumni Mamk has better chance to reach at becoming alumni and get them involved with the activities already during their studies in the university (of applied sciences). Alam

(2006, 17) thought also that customer interaction may help shorten a development cycle time, also known as “time to market.” The process of customer interaction may yield the most up-to-date information about customer preferences and needs that are changing fast. This potentially reduces the need for alterations in a service delivery process in the later stages, because a firm can collect and process customer information for its new service development projects in a concurrent basis.

I gave above several development ideas for the international alumni activities as a whole and now I will also list them here.

Recommended actions of development are the following:

- Create a clear strategy and concept for the international alumni activities.
- Make the international alumni activities appear to be more part of everyday activities of the university of applied sciences.
- Do development work together with the present students and alumni. (Value co-creation)
- Create work life connections
- Involve alumni and students more effectively, also at the early stage of studies
- Think “out of the box” and be ready to present also half-created ideas
- Increase the knowledge of present students and alumni regarding international alumni activity
- Use personal selling (From teacher to students/alumni, etc.)
- Offer information in English (Websites of the school, Facebook, etc.)
- Communicate more effectively with the present students and alumni
- Utilize social media and social networking sites in interaction and marketing
- Advertise alumni activities more effectively at school (internal marketing)
- Improve event organizing (location, planning, funding, etc.)
- Inspire and attract alumni and students (make alumni activity appealing and convenient)

6.2 Recommendations for International Alumni Activities of Business Management Degree Programme

I narrowed also my approach to one international degree programme. Next I am going to give recommendations for Business Management degree programme regarding the international alumni activities. International degree programmes do not have big differences in numbers regarding the alumni activities (amount of joined alumni). This is because the international degree programmes are younger than Finnish ones. Although according to Kauppinen, the graduated students of the Finnish Business Management degree programmes have been one of the active ones, which might be because of the nature of the study field. Business people like to network with others and see the value of it.

Mamk could try to activate Business Management students already during their studies regarding the international alumni activities. For example, projects are part of the study process in the degree programme, so maybe this could be the way to get the students involved with activities in early stage. For example, one university of applied sciences has had entrepreneurial evenings to their alumni entrepreneurs and by this way school has aimed at finding mentors for students' start-up businesses. Mamk could also think about this kind of option for the Business Management alumni, when the alumni could network with each other and with students. This would be a nice option for the traditional seminars and educational lectures.

Mamk should organize some visits to students and get them to have the chance to see the businesses of Mamk alumni and hear about their careers. The results disclosed that the students are highly interested in hearing about the experiences of the alumni and about their career paths. This might offer more training places for the students, and probably it would be easier to get training places from their own study field and searching process wouldn't be that challenging. Business Management students would be able to create work life connections with the alumni during their studies which would be valuable to Mamk, alumni and students. For example, most of the interviewed universities of applied sciences had the goal to get their students to be employed and the alumni activities are a good way to help out with this goal.

When alumni activities are successfully carried out, it brings a lot of benefits to the schools, alumni, and work life sector. According to Hohenthal et al. (2012, 20-29) the university of applied sciences makes its connections with work life sector stronger and gets to use an extensive network of experts. This network offers current information of the needs of the work life sector and it can be utilized in education. Alumni can use the network in order to find business partners, clients, and also seek new and fresh information in their own business sector. Business management alumni and alumni entrepreneurs have usually wide connections with businesses and other working fields. Mamk could utilize this and remember to offer enough benefits to its alumni in order to motivate them to join the international alumni activities and be active in participating in its events and even being involved in organizing them together with Mamk and the current students who will be alumni one day. It is natural that alumni seek to connect through career, social, and business networking provided by alumni associations. They are interested in learning more about their institution's academic strengths, how it educates graduates for careers, exciting developments in student-faculty collaborations and research, and opportunities to be exposed to new things and be prepared for a complex and changing world.

Mamk should think about a way to connect on Business Management students via social media and social networking sites. The first step would be to get students to be aware of the alumni activities by utilizing school's websites and putting enough information about the international alumni activities and its possibilities what it is offering to students. This information should be found easily in order to get students' attention. According to Kowalik (2011, 215-216) social media entails institutions with opportunities for a new level of engagement with prospective students, alumni, donors and community members. Social media surroundings include the prospective students and the alumni, making it a great place to interact with them and with the institution and programs. People are also using traditional communication sites and services (think webmail, and discussion groups) less and less, and choosing to use Facebook and other social networks instead. In other words, when students graduate and become alumni, every degree programme could have their own groups in LinkedIn. This would be an efficient way to Business Management alumni to keep in touch with each other and get news about relevant things like work life and alumni matters too. Noel-Levitz (2007) also mentioned that social networking can be a great resource for enlistment efforts, and could be advantage to your program. However, they still believe

the majority of your focus should be put on strengthening the experience perspective alumni have on your official websites.

Mamk has a lot of tools how to make Business Management students to be more involved with the activity and get them connected with Business Management alumni already during their study time. This would certainly motivate both of the parties, the current Business Management students and current Business Management alumni without forgetting Mamk alumni entrepreneurs. When everyone is putting effort in alumni activity by involving themselves and participating more eagerly, everyone will benefit from it. Mamk just has to take a step forward and make the international alumni activities more part of the school's everyday life activities.

I gave above several development ideas for the international alumni activities of Business Management degree programme and now I will also list them here.

Recommended actions of development are the following:

- Involve Business Management students with activity already during their studies
- Organize mutual projects for students and alumni
- Utilize alumni in mentoring activities for students and present opportunities (Startup companies and alumni entrepreneurs)
- Use personal selling (get present alumni to tell about their experiences, teachers involved with process etc.)
- Create work life connections and networks between students, alumni, and Mamk
- Utilize social media and social networking sites effectively

6.3 Reliability of the Research

I used two different research methods in my thesis work. I wanted to have information from two different channels; from other universities of applied sciences, and international students of Mamk. My aim was to utilize qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to get more versatile information out of my research. I wanted to find out the practices of the universities of applied sciences regarding the alumni ac-

tivities. I wanted to know what kind of information they had received from their alumni and how they were managing their alumni activities in order to get development ideas for Mamk. On the other hand I wanted to seek information from the current second and third year international students in order to narrow my focus on the international alumni activities and get information about their wishes and suggestions for the activity.

Reliability of Benchmarking Research

When I am thinking about my benchmarking research, I feel that it was trustworthy. I collected a lot of information regarding the alumni activities in other universities of applied sciences. I had collected information from schools before hand and set up requirements for every university of applied sciences to fulfill (purposive selection). All the alumni contact persons were asked exactly the same twelve interview questions (Appendix 1).

My aim was also to set up interview situations in a same way. I think that the findings were dependable in a way that if interviews would take place again I would get quite similar answers to my questions. Although a transferability of the research is defined by the readers of the research I believe that the research can be transferred to other contexts too. It helps also that I have given all the details about the research methods and how it was conducted considering the original research.

Of course situations always change and other universities of applied sciences are also trying to develop their alumni activities constantly, but basically I believe that all alumni contact persons aimed to answer truthfully all my questions. As I was using a recorder in the interviews, I was able to transcribe most of the interviews in the same manner. By that way I started to analyze the information which I collected earlier. One interview was made on the phone, but I didn't feel it affected my research in any remarkable way. I typed all the answers down and got equal amount of information from that interview too (4-5 pages).

I also aimed to be quite neutral in the interview situations. I believe that because I used recorder in interview situations, I did not put any of my own interpretation to any

of their answers. I transcribed everything by using their own words. Therefore a confirmability of the research should have been managed accurately.

Reliability of the survey

In case of my quantitative approach, I aimed to create and carry out survey which is measuring the right things within of my research question. I had 70 respondents, which is sufficient amount of students from the second- and the third-year international study programmes. On the other hand, Environmental Engineering groups were not that well represented than other two international study programmes; Business Management and Information Technology.

I felt my survey was conducted successfully. I built my survey together with my supervisor and second opinion was also asked. Therefore I believe that a validity of the research was well managed. The validity of the research should always be represented in a right matter, I really think that survey was measuring all the right things and I got accurate information about the students' perceptions regarding international alumni activity. I was also trying to make sure that a survey had increased scale's sensitivity by using Likert scale with numerous categories. I did not have only options agree or disagree. I offered also choices between strongly disagree and strongly agree in order to get more accurate results.

I collected all the data by using paper questionnaire forms in the same manner by visiting lectures of the degree programmes. I believe that all the students answered like they felt right for them. The survey was anonymous, so every student should have felt free to tell their true opinions about the matters. I believe that the survey was reliable and the research should have internal consistency.

I believe that my research methods were reliable and I was using a right kind of research tools. I believe that by using Webropol and SPSS gave me advantage and more diverse ways to present information. I have done frequency tables, multiple response tables, and cross tables in order to offer more accurate information about the results of research. By this way I am aiming to transfer a clearer picture of the results for readers to perceive and understand too.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Writing my thesis was a lot of longer time and energy consuming process that I could ever have anticipated beforehand. Even though I had made a timetable for my thesis and it was handling all my researches, I never expected it to take that much effort as it did. Therefore I am graduating a little bit later than I assumed, but on the other hand I was able to use all the research methods that I wanted and do it with my own schedule.

My aim was to create development ideas/recommendations for the international alumni activities and use one international (Business Management) as an example case. I gave some development ideas overall for the international alumni activities itself, because the first step is to focus on the whole concept of the activities, not just one international degree programme. Basically activities have same principles with every degree programme, but every degree programme has its own expectations and wishes. Therefore I wanted to present both; the international alumni activity and its development ideas and the international degree programme inside the activities.

I can't say that I was able to name every single development actions needed, which will solve every lacking aspect of the international alumni activity, but at least I offered a lot of realistic development ideas and recommendations. If Mamk is willing to follow them, they will together create a development path to the activity and also for the one specific international degree programme (Business Management). On the other hand we have to remember that it is easy to write ideas on the paper, but in practice it will take some resources and time to carry them out. I aimed to write as realistic development ideas as possible. I intended to be aware of the fact that the school has a limited budget to offer for the alumni activities and it has to do all the changes with the limits of given resources. Then again I believe that many things can be reached without extra funding, when people are just willing to give a little bit of their time and put some effort to it. For example, by getting alumni to the classrooms and telling about their experiences and careers would just demand involvement from the alumni and Mamk taking contact with them.

During my writing and research process, I got a lot of information about wishes and interests of the current students regarding the alumni activities. I think that it is ex-

tremely important that we use this information to improve the international alumni activities and to make the students already more involved with the activity and present alumni during their studies. This way Mamk would have an advantage, when they graduate. I feel like that I got also lot of useful information from my benchmarking research, even though the other universities of applied sciences did not provide me with a direct development path, I was able to get some good ideas which to take into account.

The Benchmarking research also revealed that the international alumni activities are not that developed in other universities of applied sciences either and many schools have a lot of improvements to do in order to develop the alumni activities, especially the international aspects of the alumni activities. I was pleased to find out that Mamk had made already some big improvements regarding the alumni activities before I even started my thesis work. The change in Asio (student portal) made a big difference and the graduated students are more eager to join the activities than in other universities of applied sciences. Mamk just has to keep up with a good work and do development work constantly regarding alumni activity and especially its international aspects, because Mamk has already noticed the need of improvements in that area.

I am willing to believe that my development ideas and recommendations, which I put together from my theory part and from my research, will create efficient enough frames for Mamk in order to develop the international alumni activities. Mamk could get the students to be more involved during their study time, get the present alumni to participate more actively in events, and lastly get the international alumni activities be more part of Mamk's everyday activities. Step by step the international alumni activities will become more familiar to the students and the present alumni will find them more beneficial for them, and Mamk will be able reach foreign alumni efficiently. All of the parties will see the value of the activities more clearly, when improvement has taken place in its activities.

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Interview Regarding Alumni Activities

1. How alumni activities are carried out at your University of Applied Sciences?
(What kind of events do you have, and how often?)
(Are there as many events in English as in Finnish etc.?)
2. What kind of activities your current alumni are seeking?
3. How are your alumni relations managed?
4. What kind of goals does your school have for your alumni collaboration?
(What kind of benefits would school like to have out of alumni activities?)
(Why alumni relations are important for your University of Applied Sciences?)
5. Who is/are responsible for alumni activities at your University of Applied Sciences? /How is it organized?
6. Did alumni activities take place first in Finnish or were activities developed also in English along the Finnish side?
7. Are alumni activities as developed in English as in Finnish?
8. Are there differences between degree programmes regarding alumni activities?
(number of graduated students who join in alumni activities)
9. Are there differences between degree programmes, which are offered in English regarding alumni activities? (number of graduated students who join in alumni activities)
10. How many (approx.) new alumni do join in the activities every year?
11. What kind of development work are you doing regarding the alumni activities?
12. How do you see the future of the alumni activities at your University of Applied Sciences?
(How alumni collaboration will appear in the future?)



Alumni questionnaire

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. How old are you?

Age

3. Degree Programme

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Environmental Engineering
- ☐ Information Technology

4. Year of study

- ☐ 2nd year
- ☐ 3rd year
- ☐ Other, which year?

5. What is your nationality?

Nationality

6. How long have you been living in Finland?

- ☐ <1 year ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-4 years ☐ over 4 years

7. Are you planning to live in Finland after your studies?

- ☐ Definitely yes
☐ Probably yes
☐ Probably no
☐ Definitely no
☐ I don't know

ALUMNI QUESTIONS

8. Are you aware of alumni network at MAMK?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

9. If you answered yes, how did you get to know about alumni activity of MAMK?

10. In which way would you like to gain information of alumni activity before graduation? (Select 3 most important ones)

- ☐ Facebook
☐ Flyers
☐ Websites of MAMK
☐ E-mail
☐ LinkedIn
☐ From your teachers
☐ Some other channel, what?

☐ I don't want to have any information regarding alumni activity

11. In which way would you like to gain information of alumni activity after graduation? (Select 3 most important ones)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flyers
- ☐ Websites of MAMK
- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ From your teachers
- ☐ Some other channel, what?

- ☐ I don't want to have any information regarding alumni activity

12. In which language would you like to receive information of alumni activity?

- ☐ In English ☐ In Finnish

13. What kind of alumni activities are you interested in? (After your graduation, when you are alumna/alumnus) Cross your option

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am interested in networking with other MAMK alumni	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in acting as a mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in educational events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interesting in social events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in getting information on postgraduate studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in getting information of working life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in giving a lectures as a quest lecturer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am interested in organizing alumni events together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

with MAMK

14. In what kind of alumni events would you like to participate? (Select 2 most interesting)

- ☐ Class reunions
- ☐ Get together events
- ☐ Educational events
- ☐ Professional events
- ☐ Something else, what?

- ☐ I don't want to participate

15. How often would you like to participate in alumni events?

- ☐ More often than once a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Every other year
- ☐ Less than every other year
- ☐ Never

16. Where would you like to participate in alumni events?

- ☐ In Mikkeli
- ☐ In Helsinki
- ☐ Somewhere else in Finland
- ☐ In some other countries, where?

- ☐ Nowhere (I am not willing to participate)

17. Would you be interested in hearing present alumni's experiences about their studies and careers for example during your classes?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. If you answered yes, what kind of information would you like to hear from the alumni?

19. Do you have wishes or suggestions regarding international alumni activity?

20. Would you be willing to join in the alumni network as you graduate? (Joining in the alumni activity is free of charge!)

☐ Yes

☐ No, Why?

Frequency tables**Question1.**

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Female	34	48,6	48,6
Male	36	51,4	51,4
All in total	70	100,0	100,0

Question3.

	Fre- quency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Business Management	34	48,6	50,0
Environmental Engineering	4	5,7	5,9
Information Technology	30	42,9	44,1
Respondents	68	97,1	100,0
No answers	2	2,9	
All in Total	70	100,0	

Question4.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
2nd year	35	50,0	50,7
3rd year	22	31,4	31,9
Other	12	17,1	17,4
Respondents	69	98,6	100,0
No answers	1	1,4	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question6.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Less than one year	18	25,7	26,5
One to two years	30	42,9	44,1
Three to four years	11	15,7	16,2
Longer than four years	9	12,9	13,2
Respondents	68	97,1	100,0
No answers	2	2,9	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question7.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Definitely Yes	7	10,0	10,0
Probably Yes	27	38,6	38,6
Probably No	12	17,1	17,1
Definitely No	5	7,1	7,1
I dont know	19	27,1	27,1
All in total	70	100,0	100,0

Question8.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Yes	6	8,6	8,7
No	63	90,0	91,3
Respondents	69	98,6	100,0
No answers	1	1,4	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question12.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
In English	59	84,3	86,8
In Finnish	9	12,9	13,2
Respondents	68	97,1	100,0
No answers	2	2,9	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question15.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
More often than once a year	17	24,3	24,6
Once a year	37	52,9	53,6
Every other year	7	10,0	10,1
Less than every other year	4	5,7	5,8
Never	4	5,7	5,8
Respondents	69	98,6	100,0
No answers	1	1,4	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question17.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Yes	55	78,6	80,9
No	13	18,6	19,1
Respondents	68	97,1	100,0
No answers	2	2,9	
All in total	70	100,0	

Question20.

	Frequency	Percent of all	Percent of respondents
Yes	49	70,0	73,1
No	18	25,7	26,9
Respondents	67	95,7	100,0
No answers	3	4,3	
All in total	70	100,0	

Multiple Responses**Question10.**

	Responses	Percent of Cases
Facebook	28	40,0%
Flyers	14	20,0%
Website	44	62,9%
Email	50	71,4%
LinkedIn	6	8,6%
Teachers	47	67,1%
Other channel	2	2,9%
No information wanted	3	4,3%
Responses in total	194	

Question11.

	Responses	Percent of cases
Facebook	47	68,1%
Flyers	12	17,4%
Websites	37	53,6%
Email	54	78,3%
LinkedIn	14	20,3%
Teachers	10	14,5%
Other channel	1	1,4%
No information wanted	4	5,8%
Responses in total	179	

Question13.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Networking	1,5%	7,4%	47,1%	36,8%	7,4%	100,0%
Mentor activities	8,8%	30,9%	36,8%	22,1%	1,5%	100,0%
Educational events	1,4%	10,1%	24,6%	53,6%	10,1%	100,0%
Social events	1,5%	9,0%	31,3%	40,3%	17,9%	100,0%
Information on postgraduate studies	1,5%	7,4%	19,1%	50,0%	22,1%	100,0%
Information on working life	0,0%	2,9%	5,8%	47,8%	43,5%	100,0%
Quest lecturer	7,4%	20,6%	36,8%	23,5%	11,8%	100,0%
Organizing events together with Mamk	7,4%	23,5%	45,6%	20,6%	2,9%	100,0%

Question14.

	Responses	Percent of cases
Class reunions	16	22,9%
Get together events	26	37,1%
Educational events	30	42,9%
Professional events	50	71,4%
Something else	1	1,4%
Not willingness to participate	4	5,7%
Responses in total	127	

Question16.

	Responses	Percent of cases
Mikkeli	50	71,4%
Helsinki	28	40,0%
Somewhere else in Finland	11	15,7%
In Other countries	4	5,7%
Not willingness to participate	4	5,7%
Responses in total	97	138,6%

Cross tables**Gender * Intention to live in Finland after studies Crosstabulation**

	Intention to live in Finland after studies					Total
	Definetely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably No	Definetely No	I dont know	
Female	4 11,8%	10 29,4%	7 20,6%	3 8,8%	10 29,4%	34 100,0%
Male	3 8,3%	17 47,2%	5 13,9%	2 5,6%	9 25,0%	36 100,0%
Total	7 10,0%	27 38,6%	12 17,1%	5 7,1%	19 27,1%	70 100,0%

Cross tables of question13.

	Networking					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	0 0,0%	4 12,1%	17 51,5%	9 27,3%	3 9,1%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	1 3,4%	0 0,0%	14 48,3%		1 3,4%	29 100,0%
Total	1 1,5%	5 7,6%	32 48,5%	23 34,8%	5 7,6%	13 44,8%

	Mentor activities					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	3 9,1%	14 42,4%	7 21,2%	8 24,2%	1 3,0%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	2 50,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	2 6,9%	6 20,7%	14 48,3%	7 24,1%	0 0,0%	29 100,0%
Total	6 9,1%	21 31,8%	23 34,8%	15 22,7%	1 1,5%	66 100,0%

Study program * Educational events Crosstabulation

	Educational events					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	1 3,0%	5 15,2%	9 27,3%	14 42,4%	4 12,1%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	1 25,0%	0 0,0%	2 50,0%	1 25,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	0 0,0%	1 3,3%	8 26,7%	20 66,7%	1 3,3%	30 100,0%
Total	1 1,5%	7 10,4%	17 25,4%	36 53,7%	6 9,0%	67 100,0%

Study program * Social events Crosstabulation

	Social events					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	0 0,0%	2 6,1%	8 24,2%	15 45,5%	8 24,2%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	1 25,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	1 3,6%	3 10,7%	11 39,3%	10 35,7%	3 10,7%	28 100,0%
Total	1 1,5%	6 9,2%	20 30,8%	26 40,0%	12 18,5%	65 100,0%

APPENDIX 2(13).

	Information on postgraduate studies					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	1 3,0%	2 6,1%	5 15,2%	16 48,5%	9 27,3%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	2 50,0%	2 50,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	0 0,0%	3 10,3%	8 27,6%	14 48,3%	4 13,8%	29 100,0%
Total	1 1,5%	5 7,6%	13 19,7%	32 48,5%	15 22,7%	66 100,0%

Study program * Information on working life Crosstabulation

	Information on working life				Total
	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	2 6,1%	2 6,1%	13 39,4%	16 48,5%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	2 50,0%	2 50,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	0 0,0%	2 6,7%	17 56,7%	11 36,7%	30 100,0%
Total	2 3,0%	4 6,0%	32 47,8%	29 43,3%	67 100,0%

Study program * Quest lecturer Crosstabulation

	Quest lecturer					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	2 6,1%	9 27,3%	12 36,4%	6 18,2%	4 12,1%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	2 50,0%	2 50,0%	0 0,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	3 10,3%	4 13,8%	11 37,9%	8 27,6%	3 10,3%	29 100,0%
Total	5 7,6%	13 19,7%	25 37,9%	16 24,2%	7 10,6%	66 100,0%

Study program * Organizing events together Crosstabulation

	Organizing events together					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	
Business Management	3 9,1%	7 21,2%	15 45,5%	6 18,2%	2 6,1%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	1 25,0%	3 75,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	1 3,4%	5 17,2%	15 51,7%	8 27,6%	0 0,0%	29 100,0%
Total	5 7,6%	15 22,7%	30 45,5%	14 21,2%	2 3,0%	66 100,0%

Cross tabulation of study program and willingness to hear alumni**Study program * Willingness to hear info from alumni Crosstabulation**

	Willingness to hear info from alumni		Total
	Yes	No	
Business Management	27 81,8%	6 18,2%	33 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	4 100,0%	0 0,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	22 75,9%	7 24,1%	29 100,0%
Total	53 80,3%	13 19,7%	66 100,0%

Cross tabulation of study program and willingness to join in activity**Study program * Willingness to join in activity Crosstabulation**

	Willingness to join in activity		Total
	Yes	No	
Business Management	20 58,8%	14 41,2%	34 100,0%
Environmental Engineering	3 75,0%	1 25,0%	4 100,0%
Information Technology	24 88,9%	3 11,1%	27 100,0%
Total	47 72,3%	18 27,7%	65 100,0%